Marion Zimmer Bradley's

Fantasy

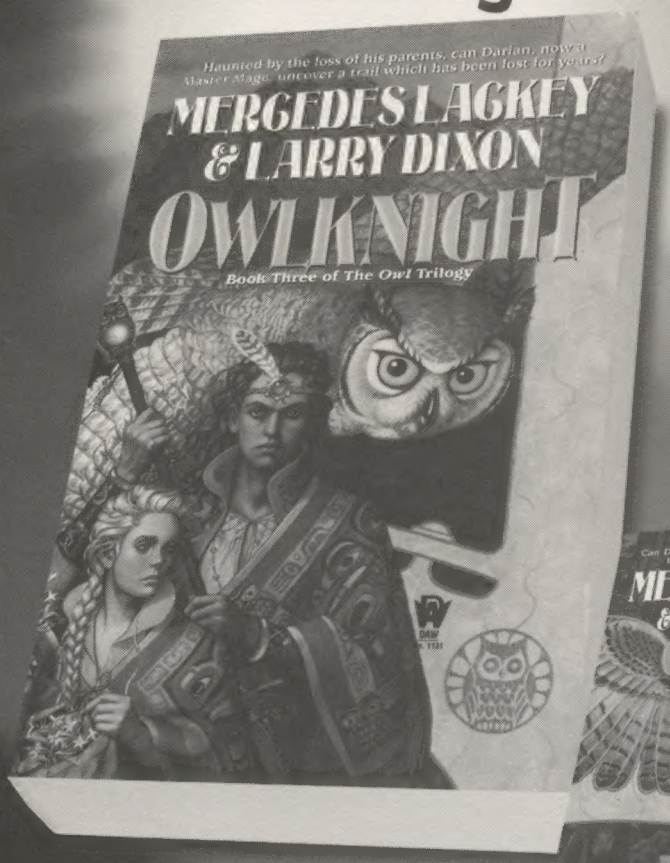
Magazine
Autumn 2000
Issue 49

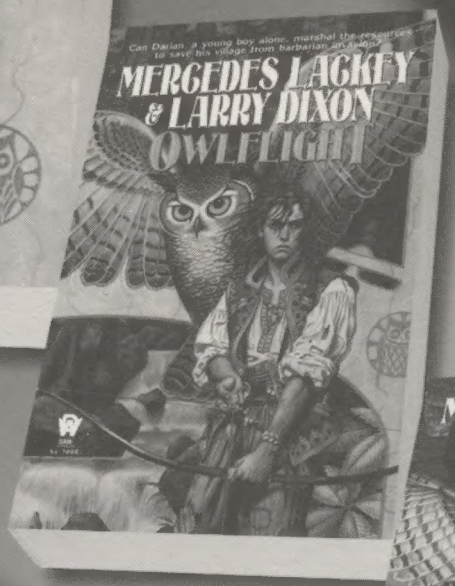
$5.95
($8.95
Canada)

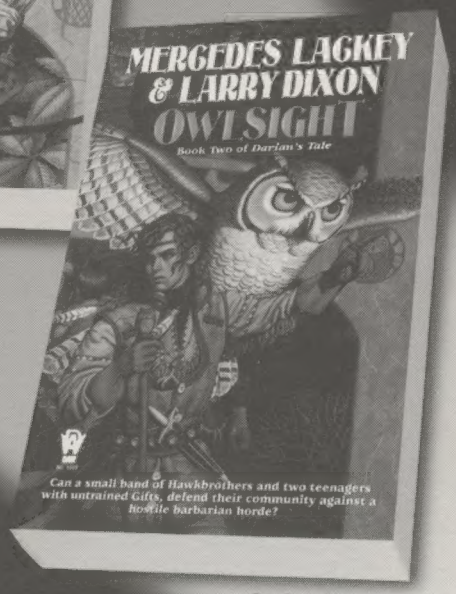
"Rowan, Oak, and Iron"
by Susan Dexter
"Piper at the Gate"
by Rosemary Edghill

"Hardcastle's Dragon"
by Martin Owton
Joan D. Vinge
interview

The National Best-selling Series


Haunted by the loss of his parents, can Darian, now a Master Mage, uncover a trail which has been lost for years?
MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLKNIGHT
Book Three of The Owl Trilogy


Can Darian, a young boy alone, marshal the resources to save his village from barbarian invasion?
MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLFLIGHT


MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLSIGHT
Book Two of Darian's Tale
Can a small band of Hawkbrothers and two teenagers with untrained Gifts, defend their community against a hostile barbarian horde?

Now in Paperback...

The conclusion to Lackey & Dixon's acclaimed *Owl* trilogy.

Two years after his parents disappearance, Darian has sought refuge and training from the mysterious Hawkbrothers. Now he has opened his heart to a beautiful young healer and found peace and acceptance in his life. That is, until he learns that his parents may still be alive—and trapped behind enemy borders...

0-88677-916-2/$6.99

Praise for the Owl Trilogy:

"*Owlsight* will bring new fans into the fold and please those who already love the land of Valdemar."
—*Starlog*

"Vintage Mercedes Lackey."
—*Voya*

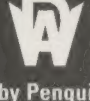
"A pleasing coming-of-age adventure featuring an appealing set of characters."
—*Romantic Times*

Don't miss the previous two volumes in the trilogy:

Owlflight
0-88677-804-2/$6.99

Owlsight
0-88677-803-4/$6.99

Available wherever books are sold.



Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com

Marion Zimmer Bradley's
Fantasy
Magazine

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

e skipped the Cauldron results for issue 47 because we didn't have enough votes to count when we went to press. We still don't! And only two (2) people have sent in Cauldron ballots for issue 48.

We need your feedback. The authors and artists need your feedback. A Cauldron "first" is worth $25 — not much more than the price of a good lunch, but still, it's something, and the egoboo that accompanies it is worth a lot as well.

And if you think we pay anyone enough for their story, article, interview, or artwork so that they don't care about the egoboo — you're mistaken. (Each winner also receives a short letter from us, announcing their prize, and a handsome certificate.)

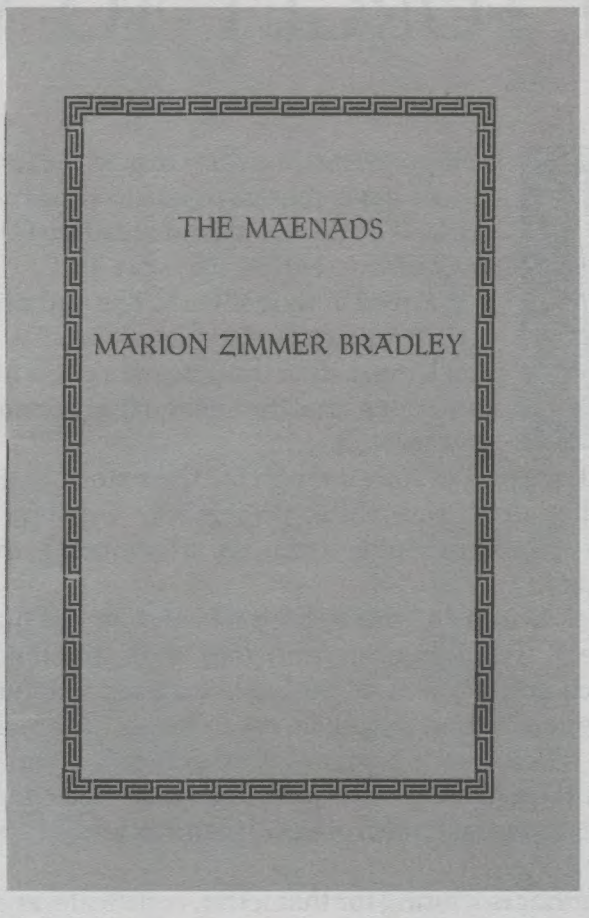
So pull out issues 47 and 48, turn to the back, and fill out that ballot, or write us a short note. Heck, we might even print your letter, and if you say something nice about a particular item, we will probably forward it to the artist or author. Even if you dislike something, or spot an error, tell us. It shows that you take us seriously even when we disagree. Letters can even be emailed to mzbfm@well.com though we prefer postcards and other forms of snailmail. (After issue 50 goes to press, Cauldron results and letters will be on our website, www.mzbfm.com.)

Some artist or author is waiting for that letter, certificate, and check. Let them know you think their work is great.

Rachel Holmen

THE MAENADS

a poem by Marion Zimmer Bradley
Limited edition of 25 copies
String bound in grey wrap cover • 16 pp
Signed by Marion Zimmer Bradley
Printed by Charles Garvin, Portland, OR 1978



Extremely limited edition of 25 copies, not to be confused with the more common edition of 75 copies. 4 available. Condition very fine plus. $200 each postpaid.
Inquiries: Marion Zimmer Bradley Limited,
PO Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249

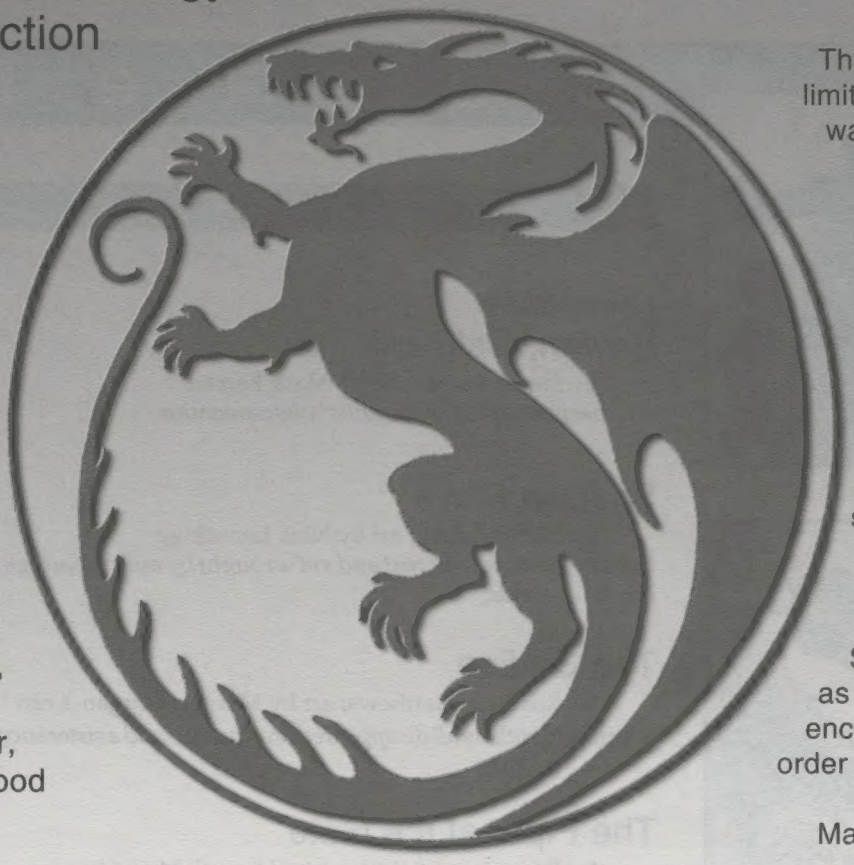
Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY WORLDS

a hardcover anthology of fantasy fiction

Cover artwork by Alicia Austin limited edition of 300 copies

Introductions by Marion Zimmer Bradley and Rachel Holmen

With stories by Rosemary and India Edghill, Steven J. Piziks, Dorothy J. Heydt, Diana L. Paxson, Deborah Wheeler, Laura J. Underwood and 12 others

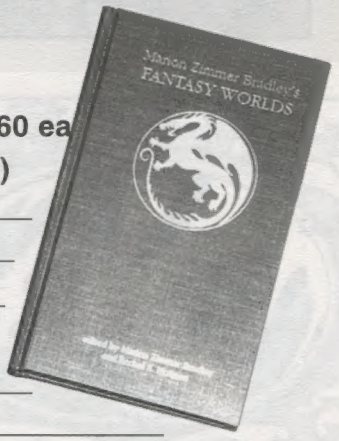


This special hardcover, limited-edition anthology was created especially for Fantasy Worlds Festival.

The cover features a copper-foil dragon by Alicia Austin, printed on a green cloth cover.

All books are signed by the editors and numbered.

Cost per book is $60.00, plus postage as noted below. Please enclose check or money order in U.S. currency and make payable to Marion Zimmer Bradley Living Trust.



Yes! **Please send me ___ copies of the Fantasy Worlds Anthology@$60 ea**

I have included ____ postage ($3.50 US, $5.00 Canada, $11.00 overseas)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/e-mail: _____

❒Check enclosed **❒Visa/MC#** _____

signature: _____ **exp.** _____

Send your order and payment to: Marion Zimmer Bradley Ltd., PO Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's
Fantasy
Magazine
Autumn 2000
Issue 49

Contents

Fiction

Cover Story
Rowan, Oak, and Iron 6
by Susan Dexter; art by Mark Ferrari
A father is awed by his daughter's determination

Shadow Plays 12
by Wil Radcliffe; art by Nick Jainschigg
So many images...so real and yet wrought by only moonlight and a strange little man's dexterous hands.

The Ondine 18
by Roxanna Matthews; art by Margaret Organ-Kean
When her brothers all disappeared on a quest, could a sister succeed?

The Piper at the Gate 22
by Rosemary Edghill; art by Hannah M.G. Shapero
Traffic was silent, and the most marvelously-wrought gate had appeared.

A Cobbler's Love Story 28
by Jeffrey Bouthiette; art by Katy Winters
His luck changed the day a rich woman's maid came to order shoes.

A Dragon in the Industry 32
by Caitlin Moriarity; art by Norman Felchle
The princess need information but her source was about to be skewered.

Hardcastle's Dragon 44
by Martin Owton; art by Barb Armata
The village sends to the wizards' guild for help.

Interior illustration for "A Dragon in the Industry" by Norman Felchle

Conqueror 48

by Jon Hansen; art by Margaret Davis

He was rough and tough, until...

Spell Check 50

by Sean Eric Fagan; art by Shirley Jowise

Sometimes assistance is useful, sometime it's vexatious.

What Little Girls Are Made Of 56

by Carol Harris; art by Alan Giana

The frighteningly powerful queen knew that the kitchen maid had followed her.

Regular Features

Writers Talk Back: Contact! 34

by Steven Piziks

Interview with Joan D. Vinge 36

by Charlene Brusso

Letters 53

The Last Word 62

by Rachel E. Holmen

The Cauldron: Vote for Your Favorites 64

Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine

Editor & Publisher Rachel E. Holmen
Layout Margaret Davis
Proofreading Gil Lamont
Debbie Notkin

Issue #49 • Autumn 2000 • Vol. 13 #1

ISSN 0897-9286

Published by:
The Marion Zimmer Bradley Living Trust, P.O. Box 249, Berkeley, California 94701, (510) 644-9222.

http://www.mzbfm.com

Letters to the Editor:
All written comments, questions, and suggestions regarding any aspect of the magazine are read by our editor and are assumed to be intended for publication. We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Letters must include sender's name and address.

Subscriptions and back issues:
Individual subscriptions are $4.00 for 1 issues in the U.S. or Canada, $11.00 foreign subscriptions. All subscriptions, including Canadian, are payable directly in U.S. funds only. Individual copies of the current issue are $5.95 plus shipping. Shipping charges are $1.00 per copy in U.S., $2.00 in Canada, foreign $6.00. **Back issues:** include $4.00 for each back issue, plus $2.50 per order shipping in U.S.

Advertising:
Rates available on request.

Booksellers and Schools:
Discounts available for multiple copies of the same issue.

Contents copyright © 2000 by Marion Zimmer Bradley Living Trust. Third class postage paid at Berkeley, CA.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to: *Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY Magazine*, P.O. Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249.

Rowan, Oak, and Iron

by Susan Dexter

"Father, I've given Dinadan my word. I'll not go back on it while I've breath in my body." Agnes stared down into her mug of breakfast beer — it was safer than raising her eyes to her father's face. Anyway, she didn't need to look. His flesh would be red as well-aged beef, his eyes vanishing into it like currants dropped into a pot of porridge.

"No lass of mine will wed one of Artos' jumped-up louts!" he thundered, right on cue. "A man with nothing more to his name than a reputation for chasing Saxons over the landscape — and a *Cornishman*, no less!" Now Agnes lifted her head. Her eyes blazed. "*You old ogre!* The High King himself was born in Cornwall." In the North, a man from the next Riding was accounted a stranger. Cornwall was as foreign and as suspect as any city in Cathay.

"Artos was born a bastard, too."

Agnes refused to rise to the insult. Her father knew perfectly well that Dinadan's lineage was as ancient as their own, and as legitimate. For what it was worth. It might not bear close scrutiny any more than her own did. Blind eyes were often turned, as years passed and scandals died. Cornwall was not so different from Britain's North.

"If the High King himself were to ask for you, I wouldn't give you to him," Col grumbled, annoyed that his daughter refused his sport.

"Dinadan didn't ask *you*," Agnes said pointedly. "He asked *me*. And I pledged him my word. We *will* wed."

Every dish on the table jumped as her father's fist slammed down on the oaken board. *Oh, he's going to regret that,* Agnes thought wickedly. *He'll be soaking the hand for days and predicting a shift in the weather with every twinge.*

"Your knight hasn't a home to put you in, nor a hide of land to support you. He —"

"He has his honor," Agnes interrupted. "And a secure position among Artos' Companions. As for land — would your only daughter, your only living *child*, have nothing from you for a marriage portion?"

"If you wed one of Artos' drones, you'll get no more land of me than you can crawl 'round on your knees in a night!" The crockery trembled again, under the storm.

"So be it," Agnes said softly, and rose from her place.

"Oh, m'lady, please don't do this! If your dead mother knew of it —" Bekka twisted her hands together, wringing words as she did the wash.

Agnes held up the leather trews she wore when they hunted boar. The pants were supple, for riding, but sturdy, to safely deflect a slashing tusk. "My dead mother isn't the problem," she said. "It's my live father. He couldn't have made himself plainer."

"But my lady, it's Samhain night! The Gates open. The dead walk. And worse than the dead —"

"At least it will be dark for almost as long as it ever is. Midsummer I'd scarcely have hours enough to crawl 'round a sheep paddock." She fetched out the gauntlets that completed her hunting costume. Her hands would take just as much punishment as her knees, and needed protection even more. "I suppose I could wait till the Solstice, but it will certainly be colder by then, and maybe a foot of snow on the ground too. Anyway, that's nearly Christmas."

"You'll take charms with you! Rowan, and oak, and iron. And water from the holy well —"

"I am taking a sack of radishseed with me. Father may take my word for how much ground I've crawled 'round, but if he won't, there'll be no doubt of it come the spring." Agnes worried a small hole in the corner of the seed sack, such that the seeds could flow out freely but slowly, one or two at a time. She could bind the sack to her belt. No, hang it about her neck, where she could watch it. "Anything else is just extra weight."

"Oh, my lamb, my poor lamb," Bekka whimpered. "Is he truly worth all of this?"

"Dinadan?" Agnes looked toward her chamber window. The castle's walls were so thick that the opening was nearly a tunnel to the world outside. The slice of sky at the far end was as gray as the stone. Through the overcast, the sun managed to glow faintly,

a round patch the color of sulphur. It nearly touched the western hills. "As it happens, he *is*. But this is nowt to do with Dinadan. It's about getting what's *mine*, as my father's child."

"He didn't mean what he said!"

"Then he should have held his peace." Agnes donned the trews, and belted them. "He said what he said, Bekka. He set the terms. Now, I'll abide by them. As much land as I can crawl 'round by morning."

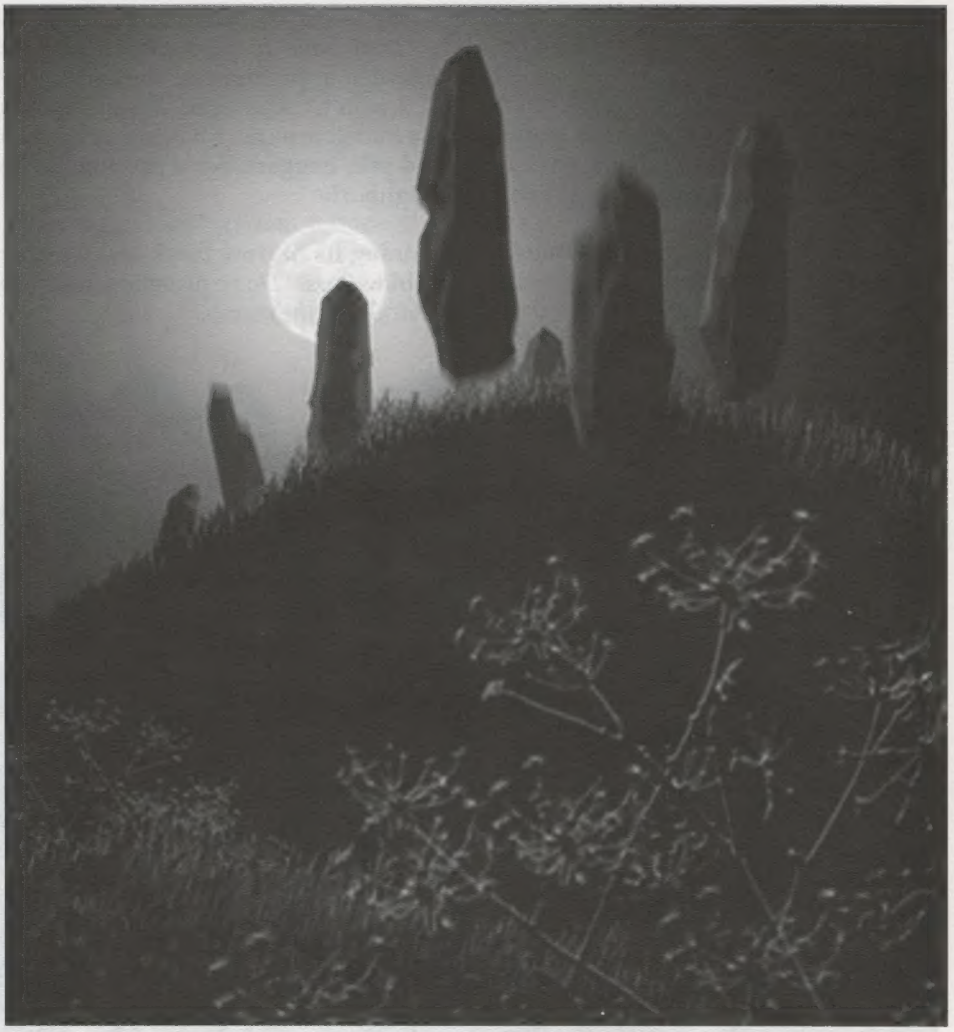
Agnes let herself out the postern door, the narrow last resort should the castle be overrun and no longer defensible. She was alone. She had made Bekka wait in her chamber — Agnes made no attempt to conceal what she was doing, but she preferred not to have a wailing audience at the start of it.

Few of the windows behind her showed light. Candles, lanterns, fires, all attracted wandering spirits. Every smallest opening in the stone was defended by a bunch of scarlet rowan berries. The peasants would have doused all their fires, leaving their homes cold and uninviting to roving ghosts. Agnes' father trusted to the cold stone of his fortress to do likewise. *It certainly works upon the living,* Agnes thought.

She walked to the bottom of the hillock the castle crouched upon. Her father could keep his brooding stronghold — meadows and cropland were what brought in cash money, not fortresses. She would not lack a roof to lay her head beneath, whether she slept in her betrothed's leather tent or Artos' Camelot. The night stars made a fine roof, if need be. She pulled on her gauntlets as she walked.

On flat ground, Agnes knelt. The earth felt a bit cooler than the air, possibly because it held more moisture. If the fields were very muddy, she would leave such a track that she would not need the radish seeds to witness her claim. Agnes jiggled the bag to be sure it was trickling seeds, and began to crawl.

Crawling. Babes did it, before they walked. They enjoyed a great deal of mobility, enough to gray many a nursemaid's hair beforetime. It was utter simplicity, though Agnes found the locomotion somewhat limited. Now that she knew better ways of moving herself from one place to another, crawling was slow. Horses and cattle moved swiftly upon their four limbs, but they did not need to drag anything behind them, as she must her feet and lower legs.



Still, she was surprised at the amount of ground she could cover. Agnes had heard tales of pilgrims crawling on their bellies all the way 'round the outsides of cathedrals, of holy mountains patiently ascended on bended knee. One sinner had won pardon by walking several miles to a shrine of the Madonna — kneeling and offering a prayer to God's Mother after each and every step. It was certainly difficult — it was meant to be. Just as certainly, it was possible.

Agnes was glad her father had not enjoined her to crawl on her belly, wriggling like a snake. He would, if he'd thought of it. And if she had needed to tell her beads at intervals, that would have forced her to halt, over and over. Her hands worked every bit as hard as her knees, and seemed less suited to the punishment. How did babes manage, with their little starfish hands?

Crawling. Her wrists felt stiff, fragile. The gauntlets gave them a trace of support, but they were still weak. No wonder. Much of her weight was carried on the heels of her hands. Her knees made no protests until she came to a wash of gravel, which was rather painful despite the leather trews. She ought to have thought to wrap rags around her knees. Perhaps her wrists as well.

The bag of radish seeds swung from her neck, dripping seeds one by one. The seeds were pale, and large enough for her to see easily, the reason she'd chosen them, besides their reliable sprouting. Agnes did wish she'd chosen a bag with a broader thong to hang it from. This one's narrow leather strap sawed across the back of her neck with every swing of the bag. It would soon raise blisters, and then rend them.

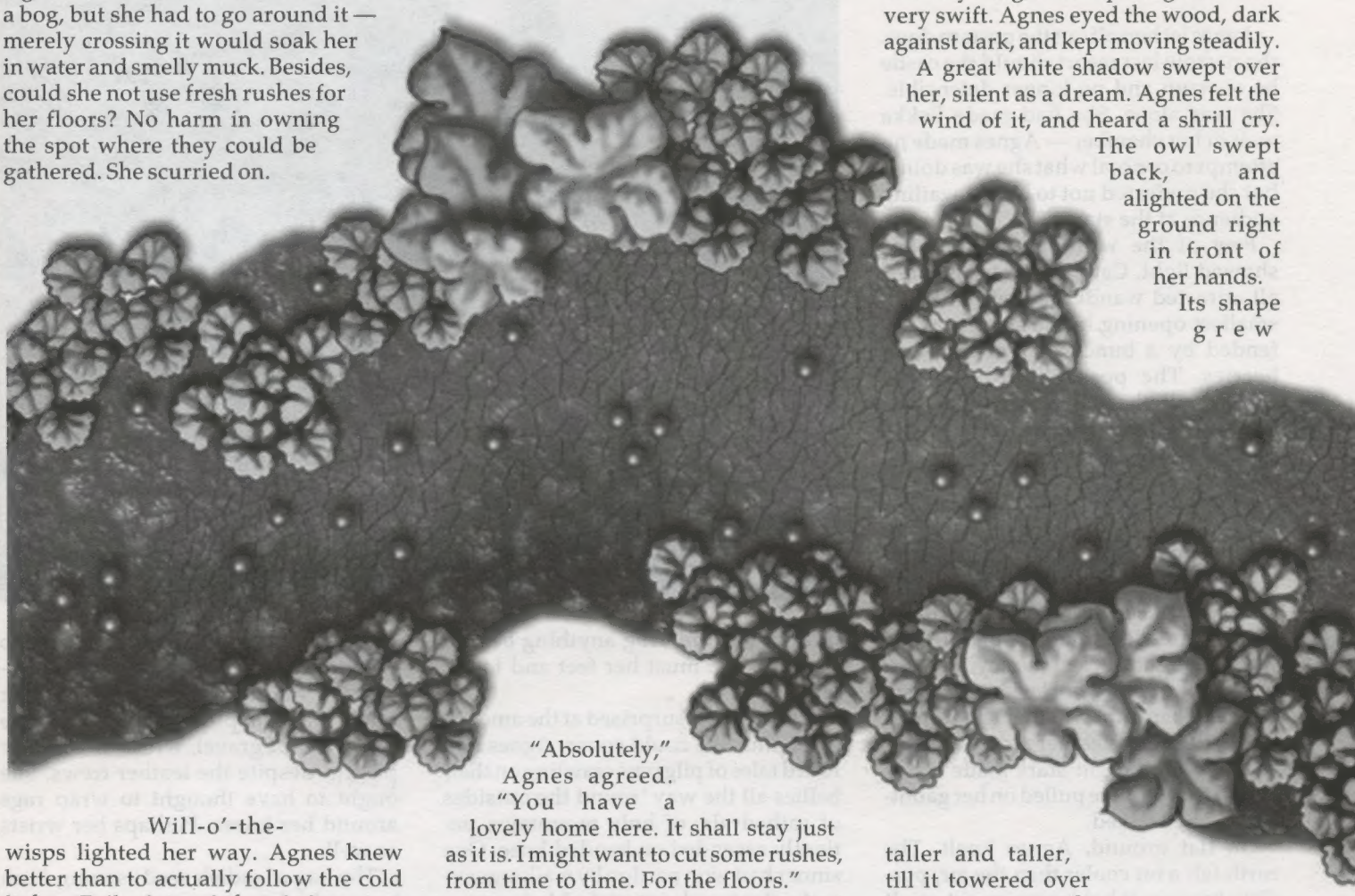
She craned back over her shoulder. She'd done well — already she had put the castle out of sight. She tried to keep her course firm in her mind. Agnes knew which fields she wanted, but the landscape would look rather different from her knees than it did from her

Artwork by Mark Ferrari

palfrey's back. Especially in the dark. She could not afford to waste time being lost.

Ah. Downhill at last. It was not much easier — it actually made her wrists hurt more. *I shall not be able to write to tell Dinadan of this,* Agnes thought, and went on.

At the bottom of the slope lay a marsh. Sedges and the spent leaves of yellow flag stuck up out of the wet ground. Agnes did not think she needed to own a bog, but she had to go around it — merely crossing it would soak her in water and smelly muck. Besides, could she not use fresh rushes for her floors? No harm in owning the spot where they could be gathered. She scurried on.



Will-o'-the-wisps lighted her way. Agnes knew better than to actually follow the cold lights. Folk claimed they led to treasure, but she thought that more often than not they led only to drownings.

And anyway, when she wouldn't go to them, the lights obligingly came to her. All at once a glow was thrust into Agnes' face. Behind it she could see a brown creature the size of an otter, standing on its hind legs, like a man. It had large, upstanding ears, nothing like an otter's. Its teeth, sharp as fishbones, glinted when it spoke.

"What do ye want here?" it asked her, in a cold, shrill voice.

"Just passing," Agnes said politely, still crawling. The creature had to hop backward to keep its shiny eyes on her — and to keep her from running into it.

"Ye'll have to go back," it said. It sounded apprehensive, though.

"I won't," answered Agnes. "When the marsh is mine, I'll bring you bread and salt, boggart. For a present. To be neighborly."

"Ssssalt is tasssty," the boggart said, running its narrow black tongue over its black lips. *"Do ye promissss never to be draining the marsh?"*

"Absolutely," Agnes agreed. "You have a lovely home here. It shall stay just as it is. I might want to cut some rushes, from time to time. For the floors."

"Sssssertainly." The creature vanished with the sort of a *pop!* a bubble makes, as it rises out of murky water. The wisp of light, though, flitted before Agnes for a long way, helping her to avoid the deeper pools.

There was no avoiding the hills, which rose like the backs of sleeping cattle, one after another. There were three of them, with small fertile valleys lying between. If she could actually get up the third one, that was as far as Agnes intended going — she would follow its ridge line back toward the castle. That would give her a fair bit of ground, if she could get 'round it. Agnes had no easy way to reckon the hour, not until the returning sun began to lighten the sky. By the time she saw that happening, it would be too late, unless she was very near to finishing her course.

She passed a thicket of elder. Something inside it rustled, though Agnes did not feel a breath of wind. Something else ran over her fingers. She thought. Between the dark and the gloves, it was hard to be sure. She hadn't *seen* anything, but the passage had been very swift. Agnes eyed the wood, dark against dark, and kept moving steadily.

A great white shadow swept over her, silent as a dream. Agnes felt the wind of it, and heard a shrill cry. The owl swept back, and alighted on the ground right in front of her hands. Its shape grew taller and taller, till it towered over her, a woman with a bird's face and an owl's feet peeping from under the hem of her filmy gown. She held out a hand, which had human fingers but rather long nails. Two fat mice twitched on the palm, then lay still.

"These little witches were stealing your radish seeds as they fell," the bird woman said. "Do you pledge never to set ax to elder?"

"Nor to rowan, nor hazel, nor hawthorn," Agnes said solemnly. "Nor will I allow others to do so."

The bird woman's eyes were empty, like the eye holes of a mask. But as she had spoken, the bird-beak had opened

Artwork by Mark Ferrari

and closed over the words. Now she inclined her round head graciously. Agnes crawled onward.

Once across the flat of the valley, Agnes faced the second hill. Its slope was not particularly steep, but she dug her fingers gratefully into tussocks of grass as she scrambled toward the top. She was sweating, and breathing rather hard. The next valley was a fog, she never afterwards remembered anything about crossing it. Only pale mist.

The third hill loomed like a wall of grass. It was not truly *that* sheer — a horse could be ridden up it — but Agnes was too weary to lift her head, so her progress felt useless, a struggle matched against an endless climb. Like climbing in a dream.

The earth trembled under her hands. Agnes hoped it was only a herd of wild ponies she felt coming, and not her father's horsemen. She had not thought he would try to stop her, any more than *he* had thought she would take up his challenge.

He'll have a hard time getting his men to venture out tonight, though.

A scatter of pebbles came bouncing down the slope. Agnes lifted her head. The hill was crowned by a circle of nine standing stones. Even in the dark of night, she could see them silhouetted against the sky. She stared.

The great stones were dancing. Ponderously, like plowhorses galloping, they circled in their place. Then all at once the dance circle opened out into a line, and the tall stones began trooping down the far side of the hill, vanishing from her sight.

Agnes crawled along after them, just to one side of the deep muddy furrows the stones left. The stones marched down to the stream in the valley, and wet their heavy feet in it. Once each year they went down thus, to drink.

Must be a thirsty life, Agnes thought.

She kept to the ridge, herself. What she had planned would be hard enough. She could not try for the next valley as well. She wished for a glimpse of the stars, to tell her how much of the night remained, but the spaces between the wind-tattered clouds were too fleeting to be useful.

Her hands were past aching. Her legs were leaden, her shoulders and her back stiff. She would be clumsy as the stones, when she stood on her feet again. She kept crawling, the movement automatic now.

The wind freshened. Agnes caught the chatter of voices in it, high-pitched, like willow whistles. All at once sleet began to fall upon her. She felt tiny balls of ice bouncing on her back. Her hair collected a crust. It melted and dripped into her eyes.

She checked the bag of radish seed, to make sure the ice had not clogged its hole. It was half emptied. Agnes hoped she had guessed aright, that she had brought seed enough to mark her passage all the way back.

She crawled on, into the wind. Sometimes the air carried sleet, and sometimes rain. Sometimes the earth under her hands was gritty with ice, and sometimes her hands sank deep into mud. Once, either extreme would have been unpleasant, but by then her hands were closer to stumps than fingers. She felt cold mud seeping into her right glove, where a seam had torn open. Agnes endured the discomfort without a shudder.

The rain stopped just before she came to the river. Agnes hoped she had aimed truly for the ford. It was broad, she knew. They drove the cattle across it. Still, if she missed the shallow spot, she'd drown herself.

She bound up the hole in the seed sack. No sense wasting — radishes would hardly root in running water. She thrust the bag inside her clothing, lest it be dunked in the stream as she crawled through.

Agnes crept down to the ford. She could see the stones of it under the running water — odd how the dark was not all that dark once she'd been out in it awhile. She could see as well as she needed to.

Just as she put her hands in the cold water, the stream boiled up in front of her. A fine tall horse stood tossing its head in the center of the ford. Its hide was shining wet. Its long mane was the color of froth. She had heard no hoof beats.

"Like a ride across, would you?" it asked her hopefully. "This rain has made the river rise. You'll be in up to your pretty nose."

Artwork by Mark Ferrari

Her nose was running, and certainly red, if any skin actually showed through the mud splashed on her face. "No, thank you, kelpie," Agnes said courteously. "After all the rain and the sleet, I can hardly be wetter. And it isn't all that far across."

The kelpie snorted at her. Sparks came out of its nostrils, and puffs of steam. It laughed, a good sport about being recognized. Sleet began to pock the water once more. "Not a fit night out for man nor spirit," it agreed savagely.

I am neither, Agnes reminded herself. She could make out a procession of white shapes flitting from the direction of the village — and its graveyard. She crawled quickly across the slippery stones of the ford, past the silent kelpie. The water came up to her elbows, and she could feel it squelching in her boots, long after.

Beneath her hands, the ground shuddered once more. There were no standing stones near. Agnes raised her head. A snell wind whipped across her face, howled in her ears. Great shapes began sweeping past her nose. She could hear others passing behind her. Hooves pounded. A horn wound, sharp and shrill.

Some of the shapes were horses. Others were dark, slender deer. The rest, she could not name. Each bore a rider. Mostly those had humanish shapes, though with a few it was difficult to be certain. The one carrying the great hunting horn halted his mount before her.

His head was a stag's, with antlers that spread wide, like oak branches. The eyes which looked down at Agnes glowed gold, like honey in the sun. The stag's mouth opened, and a rich human voice came out, thick as peat smoke, sweet as mead.

"This is a merry meeting," the Hunt's master declared. "And you are a rare creature, to dare this course on this night. You are welcome to join us, if it suits you." He gestured toward a white pony, which stood riderless where no mount had stood a moment before. Its tail and its mane both dragged the ground, like twin waterfalls. Its eyes shone red as firecoals.

Agnes regarded the creature — the huntsman, not the pony — through her wet hair. "You do me far too much honor," she said.

"You would honor me," the stag-head countered.

"Another time, perhaps." Agnes' neck ached from looking up at him, but she kept a smile upon her chapped lips.

The huntsman lifted his horn to his stag's mouth, and blew a deafening blast. His Hunt sprang into a gallop at once, and in a heartbeat their racket was no more than the crying of a flock of wild geese, high up in the sky.

The eastward horizon was, ever so

faintly, beginning to glow. Agnes scuttled on. She was on the road now, but soon wished she was not — the same stones which kept the mud at bay were cruel to her knees. She crawled quickly to one side of it, to the easier going of the grass. It would be fine to own the road. Maybe she could charge her father a toll, every time he used it to get home. She heard a bird begin to chirp sleepily, and redoubled her efforts. Not much time left. So much won. She must not lose it now.

Her hips ached. It was all she could do to move her legs after her hands. Agnes thought she had blisters on her knees.

In tales, maidens put on iron shoes to rove the world. They always wore out three pairs, before they were done. Maybe she ought to have strapped griddles to her knees. And put cookpots on her hands. Her fingers didn't move individually anymore. They were too swollen.

Dawn must be near. Agnes could sense the night creatures of her home, under rocks, behind trees. They didn't appear, didn't plague her further. A few bats jigged in the sky, but the only owl she saw now was perched in a hollow tree, ready to retreat from the day and the pesky crows, ready to sleep.

A cock crowed. Agnes crawled faster. The black rooster was always impatient, and early. Only his color had saved him from her father's wrath, and the soup pot. But there was not much time left. On she went, panting.

She could see her hands in front of her, now. The fingers looked like gray sausages. Her gloves were bursting their every seam. Agnes was more distressed at being able to see her hands than she was by their condition. Dawn was riding on her heels, panting hot on her neck.

All at once, it found her. It flung her shadow ahead of her, like a long black banner. Right to her father's feet.

Agnes forced herself upright, till she could sit back on her heels. Muscles she had not known existed screamed in protest of the change. She glared at her sire through her tangled hair. "As much as I could crawl 'round on my knees in a night," she repeated. All that was left of her voice was a harsh whispering, like the marsh wind, like the wild geese.

Col sighed, looking down at her. She was the color of the northern earth, stained green with the juices of field herbs, dyed rust and ocher in splotches where she'd crossed clay. Her skin was red from the cold wind. Her hair had burrs and brambles twined through it, icicles hanging from its ends. "All the way 'round my best fields, I'm sure," he said. "And most of another acre plastered over your hide. On Samhain night. Is there ever any doubt that you're my daughter?"

"None at all," Agnes croaked. She couldn't have stood for all the gold hid in the hollow hills, but she didn't care.

Artwork by Mark Ferrari

The morning light felt warm as honey on her back.

Col walked round the fields with his steward, recording his daughter's marriage-portion. Both men dropped their jaws a bit, seeing how the marks of her passage went on and on. It was hardly an astounding amount of land to possess, but it was a great deal of land to possess so intimately.

When they finally halted, Col turned to his man. "Take what you've written, and triple it. There's no belted knight of mine I could have ordered out of doors last night. She's proved her blood. It's the blood that counts, no matter who she marries."

So in due time, Agnes wed her Cornish knight. It was a blessed union — Dinadan was no drone. He deserved, and received, honors aplenty from his king, and the titles to broad lands. Not an acre of which was ever the match for the lands his bride had crept 'round on the night between summer and winter, with rowan, oak, and iron.

Sometimes he called her by the title she had earned that night — Lady Crawls. He always did so respectfully, and never in jest. Dinadan was no fool, either.

❄

SUSAN DEXTER writes: "I have had seven novels of fantasy appear from Del Rey Books, beginning with THE RING OF ALLAIRE in 1981. The most recent is THE TRUE KNIGHT.

"I was bred — one assumes — born, and still reside in western Pennsylvania, which reportedly suffers less clear sunny days than the Seattle area. I enjoy trail riding my Arabian horse when it isn't raining, walking with my two dogs whether it's raining or not, reading, and watching way too much tv. I used to do a bit of fencing, and if my legs hold up, I'll be demonstrating the sport soon at a writer's workshop.

"'Rowan, Oak, and Iron' is based on an actual British legend — though I've placed it in a different time and another part of the isle from its original setting. It forms part of what I hope will eventually be a very large novel of Arthur's Britain."

MARK FERRARI lives near Mendocino, on the nothern coastline of California. He is known for his amazing color pencil work; however, this issue marks a departure in his technique, since both the cover and the interior illustrations were finished on his computer.

Magic Threads

Magic Dragon

15" soft sculpture doll pattern

1989 © Julie McCullough. All rights reserved

MAGIC THREADS 719 'P' St. Lincoln, NE 68508

Just one of 45 patterns for dolls, animals, fairies & elves!
For your brochure, send $2.00 to Magic Threads, 719 P St., Dept. F, Lincoln, NE 68508.

***

Check out the Magic Threads website, www.magicthreads.com for their on-line newsletter, doll gallery, alphabetical pattern index, and class info.

Shadow Plays

by Wil Radcliffe

The goblin's hands moved in graceful arcs and turns that belied his stubby fingers. The shadows danced upon the wall, following his movements and playing their parts in his gentle production.

The small crowd watched with amazement as the goblin's tale came to life before their eyes. Monsters attacked peasants. Sorcerers conjured spirits. Heroes overthrew despots. So many images moving in dark silhouettes ... so real and yet wrought by only moonlight and a strange little man's dexterous hands.

The goblin finished and bowed deeply. "And that, my dear friends, is the tale of how I defeated the dreaded Shadow Smith whilst reuniting the worlds of fey and humankind. And now to show your appreciation you may place your coins in the cup of Bugbear, the greatest goblin scholar and minstrel in the Scatter Lands."

Some of the villagers meandered on, having enjoyed the tale but not the request. Others stayed at the street corner, tossing their coins and trinkets eagerly into Bugbear's dented tin cup. They laughed and smiled. Although they did not seem used to Bugbear's strange race, they found him at the least quaint and at the most delightful.

"You are most kind," Bugbear said. "The next performance shall commence shortly."

Suddenly a young man and woman burst through the crowd. Their eyes bulged wide and wild as their gangly, rag-clad bodies pushed, pried, and plowed a path through the bewildered and outraged townsfolk.

Several armed guards, layered head to toe in pale green armor, rampaged after the refugees. Upon their chests were cryptic runes, and one of them carried a banner with a black raven crest.

"The Coranieid?" Bugbear said as he dodged the rampage. "But they're extinct!"

The humans themselves seemed less inclined towards disbelief and more aligned with terror. "Dis Pater's men!" one exclaimed with panic.

The villagers scattered like chickens fleeing the butcher's blade. Doors slammed. Shutters closed. Locks bolted. Soon Bugbear stood alone before his performance wall, his only company the fading sounds of armored footfalls.

"Dis Pater?" Bugbear said to himself. "There's a familiar name." He lay a finger upon his chin. "Dis Pater, Dis Pater, Dis Pater." He mulled the name over a few more moments in his mind before shrugging and taking up his cup of offerings. "Bah!" he scoffed as he found an odd-looking stone with a leather strap in his coffers. "I'd rather they give me nothing at all than worthless trinkets like this." With a casual sigh Bugbear placed the oddity in his vest pocket and gathered up the small satchel which held his belongings. Then with a skip and a jump he made out for the local tavern.

The streets of the quaint village vibrated with dying echoes. A pale cloud drifted over the moon, spraying the air with gray flecks of shadow. Bugbear suppressed a growing sense of dread, a peculiar feeling that unpleasant things awaited. He doubled his pace and steadied his breath, for even a goblin had cause to fear when the Coranieid were about.

The Coranieid ... their name was as ancient as terror itself. Some called them "the poisoners". Others claimed they were the devil's own. But whatever their origins, whatever their goals, the Coranieid had haunted the dreams and realities of every race since the dawn of time. That was until the humans rose up all those centuries ago, before the Great Sundering of the world, and after the reign of the Dragon-Kings. It was said that the Mumblers of Antioch, those mysterious and wise human mages, placed a curse upon the Coranieid making them allergic to all reality. The Mumblers used the true names of all things in their spell ... except for a mysterious relic from ages gone by for which there was no true name; and the Dragons, who had long since evolved into pure spirit, leaving only their empty shells behind. The curse proved devastating. Soon the Coranieid faded from existence until it seemed there was naught left of them but shadows and whispered nightmare tales.

But now they had returned. For Bugbear had recognized their banners and crests from ancient tomes he had pe-

rused in the Library of Antioch itself. But how had this dead race risen? And why? Perhaps Bugbear's own actions of two years past (that spectacular adventure in which he and his companions destroyed the tyrannical Shadow Smith and reunited the worlds of human and fey) rebirthed the foul Coranieid. And perhaps now they sought to destroy all which could destroy them ... including Bugbear himself!

Suddenly Bugbear's goose-pimpling fears were realized. A hand grabbed him tightly about the arm, pulling him down into a filth-filled ditch. "You must stop him."

Bugbear whirled about, his pug face contorted into a mask of fright. "Away from me, unclean wretch!" he blurted.

"Listen to me," the battered warrior pleaded as he took Bugbear by the shoulders. "I am dying. The others attacked me when I questioned the Dis Pater." He pointed to a small hole in his battered, soiled armor. "My Dragonskin armor is no longer whole. I have been contaminated ... the Curse of the Mumblers takes me."

Bugbear slid from the creature's grasp. "What do you want me to do then, Coranieid scum? Make your funeral arrangements?"

"Silence your mocking tongue, goblin!" the warrior hissed. "You must stop the Dis Pater! With their armor the others are too strong for the humans. But you are a goblin. You can move in places they cannot. You can think around reality and find hidden truths. Even we Coranieid, as much as we hate your kind, respect your talents for sabotage. That has been foremost in my mind since I first saw you come into town. You're the only hope."

"And why should I stop this Dis Pater?" Bugbear asked. "Who is he that he poses such a threat?"

"He seeks ultimate power," the armored figure whispered. "At first it was a quest to cure of us the Mumbler's Curse ... a pursuit of noble intent. But now it has corrupted into a lust for domination." The Coranieid warrior's voice began to fade. "You must keep him from finding ...." Then with a dull clatter the armor caved in on dead space.

Cautiously Bugbear poked at the debris with a stick taken from nearby. Lifeless ashes stirred beneath the green armor, but nothing more was seen. "Curious," Bugbear muttered. "The Coranieid must have fashioned this armor to protect them from the curse. Being of Dragon flesh, it would keep

Artwork by Nick Jainschigg

them safe. Perhaps a small group of them has been in hiding all these centuries. But why emerge now? What is it that this Dis Pater seeks?" The goblin scholar's head puttered from side to side, like a tea pot coming to a boil. His mind struggled through the thick bog of mystery. But then everything cleared with one sudden, bright, white realization. "Oh well! None of my concern! Off to the tavern now!" With that, Bugbear clambered out of the ditch and waddled down the street, an off-key tune trailing from his whistling lips.

The tavern choked and sputtered with distasteful life. Ruffians, derelicts, and blackguards sat about in staggered clumps, their eyes dull and blank from excessive sin. Sober, they might have found the little goblin that waddled into their lives alarming, but drunk as they were, Bugbear provided only a momentary excuse to grunt before slipping back into delirium.

"A cup of hot water, my good man!" Bugbear piped to the barkeep as he climbed upon a stool.

"You that little shadow-making beastie I heard about?" the grizzled man replied.

"Indeed," Bugbear beamed. "Now, a cup of hot water, please."

"What you want that for?"

"Why, to brew my tea, of course."

"We got tea aplenty," the barkeep glowered. "You can have some of ours."

"I'm sorry," Bugbear said. "I carry my own special brand. Yours, no doubt, would upset my delicate constitution."

The barkeep then grumbled a few inaudible curses and thundered through the swinging doors, back into the kitchen area.

"Disagreeable creature," Bugbear muttered. Then with a sigh he reached into his vest pocket for his tin of precious tea. "Hello, what's this?" Instead his awkward fingers fumbled upon the odd trinket someone had thrown into his beggar's cup. He removed the object and studied it in the tavern's dim light. Milk-white and shaped like a stretched-out egg ... that was how he saw it. At the small end a leather strap had been attached, perhaps to turn it into a necklace or even a headband. Indeed the trinket was odd.

"Your cup of water," the barkeep said as he slid a mug before Bugbear.

"Ah!" Bugbear said. "Very good! Thank you, my good man!" The goblin quickly shoved the trinket back into his vest pocket and removed his tin of tea. Gingerly he sprinkled the tea leaves

into the steaming mug, stirring them gently with his pinkie before licking said digit with a satisfied lip-smack. "Ah! Perfect! Perfect! Now, would you happen to have any pasty cakes? Tea simply is not the same without pasty cakes."

"Just finish your tea and get out," he replied. "You be upsetting my regulars."

Bugbear turned about and scanned the room of ruffians. Half of them had drunk themselves into unconsciousness, and the other half looked like they were envying the first half. "Yes, I can see how they might find my sobriety upsetting. Very well, barkeep. I shall hastily drink my tea and risk hiccups. However, I require lodgings for the night. Do you offer rooms for rent?"

"I got rooms. You got gold?"

"Gold?" Bugbear blurted. "Blather and bother! I have no need for gold! I am a minstrel and performer! It is tradition for persons of my standing to be offered free lodgings!"

"I'll have none of that, little man!" the barkeep spat. "I hear you been making quite a bit of money with your shadows! You can afford to pay for a room!"

"And you could afford to learn some manners, you babbling brute!" Bugbear blurted. "Have you no respect for tradition?"

"Yes. I have a great deal of respect for such traditions as, oh, let's say, paying for lodgings."

The goblin sputtered and fumed as he reached into his many pockets rummaging about for coinage. After some fussing and fumbling Bugbear finally withdrew three gold coins. "I trust this shall suffice?"

"It'll do," the barkeep said as he scooped the coins into his greasy, sausage-link hands. "There's a room at the top of the stairs, third door on the left. If you want a bath it's two gold extra."

"Goblins don't bathe. We're too clever to get dirty. Thank you very much." And with a scowl, scoot, and scamper, Bugbear was up the stairs.

Sleep was dreadful and plodding for Bugbear that night. True, the feather bed was comfortable enough, but the warnings of the dying Coranieid kept flitting through his head. And the strange young people who broke up his shadow play ... they ran in and out of his thoughts as well. He tossed about in his bed like a fitful dog swimming in a sea of fleas.

"They say the best cure for insomnia is a clean conscience," a voice whispered from across the room.

"Who?" Bugbear exclaimed bolting upright.

"'Tis an admirer of the great Bugbear," the voice continued.

"Show yourself, taunter!" Bugbear

Artwork by Nick Jainschigg

shouted to the vague shadows and hissing darkness. He reached over and with thick, fumbling fingers lit the lamp on his night stand.

An eerie, gray-tinted, lifeless luminance filled the room. And the Coranieid stood revealed, several of them, standing tall and broad-shouldered in their Dragon-skin armor. They held captive the two youngsters who had been so prominent in Bugbear's concerns. But most noticeable was the bold creature who stood in their midst like an oak in a forest of saplings. As did the Coranieid he wore the Dragon-skin armor, yet his sprouted spikes and thorns and spires and horns. He seemed some primordial god ... some ancient force of nature.

"The Dis Pater, I presume," Bugbear said, trying to hide his fears.

"Indeed," the being replied. "It is a genuine pleasure to meet you, Bugbear. I had heard of your spectacular shadow plays even before you set foot in this humble village."

Bugbear could feel cold, steel eyes boring into his soul. He pulled the covers up to his chin, peering at the Dis Pater with eyes narrowed by suspicion. "You did not come here to discuss shadow plays, of that I've no doubt. What do you want?"

"Of course," the Dis Pater said with an apologetic bow. "I have forgotten how impatient and curious goblins can be. These children have taken something from me. I had hired them, you see, to pilfer a small item for me from a merchant here in the village. They did so, but, as is often the case with humans, they let greed get in the way of good sense. They actually thought to hold the object for ransom ... to badger me into paying them more. Very unethical, I thought. But then they are thieves after all."

"It seems you have captured them," Bugbear observed. "So I fail to see how this affects me."

"Well, the boy here ... Darius, I believe is his name ... he claims to have tossed the trinket into your cup while being pursued by my men. It was not difficult to trace your steps, as you are the only goblin in these parts and your comings and goings attract a considerable amount of attention ... as well as animosity. In fact, the owner of this establishment was only too happy to allow us entry to your room."

Bugbear swallowed hard as he remembered the dying Coranieid's warnings and childhood stories of Coranieidian cruelty. "What exactly did this 'trinket' look like?"

"It was a milk-white stone, very smooth and unblemished," the Dis Pater said.

"I ... I have seen no such stone," Bugbear lied.

"So it seems these children are liars as well as thieves." Slowly the Dis Pater slid his sword from its sheath. "The girl's name is Gwenhwyvar. I believe it is Welsh for 'white spirit'. Indeed her skin is quite fair, is it not? A lovely girl. Almost Coranieid-like in beauty." He placed the sword gently against the girl's cheek. "Perhaps if I threaten violence against Gwenhwyvar, her suitor will tell me the truth."

"But I did tell you the truth!" Darius exclaimed. "The little man has the stone!"

"Well, liars or not, you have to admire their persistence," the Dis Pater chuckled. "A shame to waste such beauty at the edge of a sword."

Gwenhwyvar looked to Bugbear with pleading eyes. Her soft young body quivered with terror. Her throat quaked with barely audible sobs. Her brow dripped with perspiration.

"By the hoary beard of Oberon!" Bugbear suddenly exclaimed. "A wourmboggle slithers from behind you!"

The Coranieid turned about with alarm to see a serpentine shape slinking across the wall. Black as ink the form seemed to reach at them with waving tentacles and twisting arms. The Coranieid drew their blades and advanced on the oddity, leaving the youths poorly guarded. Even the Dis Pater took his sword from Gwenhwyvar's cheek and directed it toward the loathsome shadow.

Bugbear pulled his secretive hands from in front of the lamp and leapt from his bed. He snatched up his coat of many pockets, ran to the prisoners, and tore them from the warriors' loosened grips. Then all three disappeared out the door and down the hall.

"He has tricked us with his bothersome shadows!" the Dis Pater raged. "After them!"

Bugbear led the humans down a set of back steps and into an alley. "Follow me, you floundering fools!" he ordered as he set out through the maze of streets. They scurried over decaying bridges and loose cobble paths, zigzagging around high-spired churches and straw-thatched cottages, careening through brown puddles of water and neatly trimmed hedges. Finally, in the secretive fashion of fugitives, they entered a windmill on the outskirts of the village.

"Bar the door," Bugbear said as he sat upon the floor. He rummaged through his over-sized coat pockets and

Artwork by Nick Jainschigg

removed a large, yellowed tome. "The Gray Book of Antioch," Bugbear hissed with delight. "I have some reading to do."

"Reading?" the boy scoffed. "Those Coranieid could burst through that door any minute. We should be planning a defense, not reading!"

"Reading brings knowledge," Bugbear explained softly. "Knowledge is the greatest defense of all." And with a relishing smile he began to flit through his precious volume of lore. Quickly he rifled through the dried parchment pages, skimming along the wise wordings of wizards past, glancing through the pretentious ponderings of long-dead philosophers, until finally settling on a particularly relevant page.

"Of all the beggar's cups in the city, you had to toss the stone into a goblin's," Gwenhwyvar sighed.

"I've had enough out of you, Gwenhwyvar!" Darius countered. "At least I wasn't the one who waved the stone under the Dis Pater's nose thinking to lure him out and barter with him."

"You're the one who got us mixed up with the heartless fiend in the first place!" she yelled. "My mother was right about you all along! You're nothing but trouble!"

"Well, at least my brand of trouble has kept food in your belly and clothes on your back!"

"What good is food and clothing when your head's on a Coranieidian pike?"

"Aha!" Bugbear erupted with fact-finding pleasure. He held up the book he had been studying. "This is the history of the fall of the Coranieid. It tells of how the great Coranieidian king Eluned used the power of a forgotten relic centuries ago to fight off human hordes threatening his kingdom. There's even an elaborate woodcut here depicting the event." His stubby goblin finger pointed out the intricate picture. "Anyhow, it goes on to tell how during the final battle, the wise Mumblers of Antioch used their arcane powers to curse the Coranieidian empire. As the Coranieid faltered under the oppression of the curse, the human armies stormed the capital city and took possession of the stone. Apparently Eluned had feared using the stone's power to its fullest."

"I bet you the Dis Pater won't be so shy," Gwenhwyvar muttered.

"Since that time the stone has passed down through human hands from generation to generation, from one conqueror's treasuries to another's," Bugbear continued. "Obviously humans lack the discipline to use its powers ... and even in the Coranieidian population I imagine only royalty can utilize the stone effectively." Bugbear suddenly cocked his head with interest and looked deeply at the picture. "Curious," he whispered.

Pounding and Coranieidian curses met at the door.

"They've found us!" Darius panicked.

"Hold them off," Bugbear ordered as he pulled a magnifying glass from his coat. "I've found something quite interesting and potentially vital." His wide saucer eye studied the woodcut intently.

"Would you stop reading that ratty old book!" Gwenhwyvar yelled as she pressed against the door.

"What more is there to learn?" Darius asked as he began bracing boards and beams between the floor and door.

Bugbear ignored them. His eyes skimmed over the rampaging barbarians, ran along the noble Coranieidian ranks, and studied the defiant figure of King Eluned. The Coranieidian leader's arm stretched out over the humans, beams of terrific energy lancing out from the pure, smooth, unblemished stone. Bugbear knew from previous study that the Mumbler scholars and artists who scribed the Gray Book of Antioch never embellished. Their woodcuts were meticulous in detail and fact. Therefore when he noted the simple, unadorned stone depicted in Eluned's naked hand, and then compared it to the simple stone that dangled from his own hand by its leather strap, he became aware of a most ironic situ-

Artwork by Nick Jainschigg

ation.

"Stand aside," Bugbear said as he pushed his way to the door, strewing away the boards and beams and undoing the latch.

The door flew open, revealing a hissing cadre of heavily armored Coranieid.

"We surrender," Bugbear said with an agreeable nod.

The Dis Pater pushed his way to the front of the Coranieid. "The stone, if you please."

"Of course," Bugbear said as he pulled the object from his vest pocket. He placed it in the Dis Pater's Dragon-gloved hand.

The Coranieidian guards filed in and recaptured their prisoners.

"I am disappointed in you, Bugbear," the Dis Pater said as he admired the long-sought relic. "Usually goblins provide more sport before yielding their treasures." The Dis Pater removed his gauntlet and pressed the stone into his naked palm. "And now you and the children shall be the first to fall before the might of the new Coranieidian empire! For the first time in 5000 years a Coranieid of the royal house wields the great stone of power!" He held the stone aloft as brilliant rays of energy spread out. He removed his great war helmet and shook out his long mane of silver hair. Gray eyes smiled with insanity and a perfect mouth opened to let out a soulless laugh.

The other Coranieid released the captives and knelt down before their glorified lord.

Darius and Gwenhwyvar rushed to Bugbear's side, finding him the only source of comfort in an increasingly uncomfortable situation.

Bugbear watched on, his eyes wide and eagle-like. He felt the pinpricks of anticipation along his spine.

And then, like indiscriminate bolts of lightning, the energy began striking down the Coranieid. Slicing out angrily, spitting bitter rays, flinging tongues of fire, the stone turned and twisted in the Dis Pater's hand. Soon all his followers lay decimated, piles of lifeless ash.

"What is this?" he gasped. His glorious hair fell out in clumps. His clean, bronze skin began to wrinkle and fall away in pale chunks. He slumped to the ground, burdened by the weight of decay. "What have you done?" he hissed to Bugbear.

"I have given you the nameless relic," Bugbear replied. He snatched the smoldering object from the Dis Pater's weak grasp. "It is the exact same stone your ancestor used to fight off the human hordes all those centuries ago." Bugbear dangled the stone before his enemy's fading eyes. "Except that when the stone fell into human hands something was added. A handy little leather strap. Humans are always losing things, you know. I think the strap was a very worthwhile adornment. Don't you?"

"I have been contaminated!" the Dis Pater screeched. "The strap was human-made!" And with one final, raging moan the Dis Pater faded into oblivion.

Bugbear plopped the handy trinket back into his pocket. He looked over to Gwenhwyvar and Darius, his mouth split into a demented grin. "You know, I believe that there is something to be gained from this little adventure."

Epilogue

The small crowd watched with amazement as the goblin's tale came to life before their eyes. Coranieid warriors stormed the streets. Human thieves prowled the alleys. And goblin scholars buried ancient nightmares. So many images moving in dark silhouettes ... so real and yet wrought by only moonlight and a strange little man's dexterous hands.

The goblin finished and bowed deeply. "And that, my dear friends, is the tale of how I defeated the nightmarish Coranieid whilst saving two hapless human thieves from their own foolish ambitions. And now to show your appreciation you may place your coins in the cup of Bugbear, the greatest goblin scholar and minstrel in the Scatter Lands."

"Well, this is just fabulous," Darius said with a sarcastic drawl as he and Gwenhwyvar nudged through the crowd of coin-tossing spectators. "After all the trouble we went through, you're the one who makes money from it!"

"Now, now, my boy," Bugbear said. "No need to be jealous of my genius! I'm willing to share a few of my earnings with you and your charming companion. However, the stone shall have to remain in my possession. It's too dangerous to be floating about."

"We'll take what we can get," Gwenhwyvar said as she began rummaging through Bugbear's cup full of coins.

"Here now!" Bugbear blurted. "I said take some, not the entire collection!"

"What's this?" Darius said as he plucked up an odd-looking bauble.

Bugbear snapped to alertness as he snatched the item from the startled boy. "Oh my! Oh mercy! Oh my mercy!" Bugbear studied the object with a magnifying glass, his expression growing ever more frantic as he gazed upon each facet. "Do you realize what this is? 'Tis the Brooch of Lleu Llaw Gyffes! A most ancient relic, sought by power-mad despots throughout the centuries! Legend has it that ..."

Before the goblin could complete his sentence, Darius and Gwenhwyvar spun about and tore through the crowd, screeches of terror trailing from their lips.

Bugbear watched the youths scatter, shrugged, and went back to his examination of the relic. "Oh, gracious me! This isn't the Brooch of Lleu Llaw Gyffes! 'Tis a button come loose from my coat! Blather and bother! And me without a sewing kit!"

And with a mad titter, the goblin commenced counting his cup full of coins.

❄

Wil Radcliffe writes: "I have lived most of my 31 years in a small community in Northeast Indiana, and much of the inspiration for my writing comes from the scenic forests, lakes, and farmlands of that area. But perhaps the greatest influences upon my writing have been the legends of King Arthur. I graduated from Ball State University's Telecommunications Department, and in 1991, I won the David Letterman Telecommunications Scholarship for a script and storyboards featuring my character Bugbear. I have worked as head copywriter for four radio stations, and I am currently employed as writer/editor for a company that produces corporate videos."

Nick Jainschigg moved a bit ago to Rhode Island with his wife Monica and a grey-cheeked parakeet. He is also knowledgeable about bats. He won the Jack Gaughan Memorial Award for Best Emerging Artist and has been Artist Guest of Honor at Boskone.

The Ondine

by Roxanna Matthews

Once there was a king who had three sons, a daughter, and a magic cup. His eldest son, Hans, was strong and brave. His second son, Fritz, was wise and well-educated. His third son, Rudy, was handsome and charming. His daughter, Bess, was everything you could expect a princess to be and then some.

One morning the king was awakened by loud wailings and lamentations. The door to the royal treasury had been broken down, the magic cup was missing, and between the treasury and the lake was a slimy, slippery path as if a slug had been walking about a bit.

Hans, who was brave and strong, immediately announced, "I will recover the magic cup," and dove into the lake. Underwater, the slippery path turned into a shiny silvery rope leading down into the black depths of the lake, down past startled fish and rocky ledges to a glimmering crystal palace. (This was about the era of Beowulf, when all heroes could breathe underwater.)

At the door of this palace stood a fearsome troll which Hans quickly killed. (What a wonderful thing it is to be brave and strong!) Entering the palace, Hans was greeted by a lissome maiden in diaphanous robes. She fell into his arms, laid her head on his bosom, and sighed, "You have saved me from the troll. Truly, you are a hero. Is there nothing I can do to repay you for your bravery and strength?"

"Shucks, Ma'am. 'Twarn't nothin'," demurred Hans, blushing to the crest of his helmet. He did not, however, let go of the maiden.

"Oh, it was!" she asserted, raising dewy eyes to gaze adoringly into his. "It was everything!" She threw her arms around his neck, stretched up on tippytoes, and kissed him on the mouth, whereupon he changed into a little red carp, which she swallowed at one gulp.

The next day, when Hans did not return, Fritz (who was wise and well-educated) declared, "I will recover the magic cup and save my brother Hans."

So he tied a long rope around his waist and told the royal guards to pull him back as fast as they could if they should feel three tugs on the rope. Then, putting a large rock in each pocket to save him the trouble of swimming down, Fritz jumped into the lake. He sank like, well, like a rock, down into the black water, past rocky ledges and startled fish, till he came to a crystal palace on the bottom of the lake. At the door of the palace stood a wicked wizard who Fritz speedily out-spelled. Entering the palace, Fritz was greeted by a lissome maiden in diaphanous robes. She took his hands in hers, stood quite close and sighed, "You have saved me from the wizard. Truly you are a scholar. Is there nothing I can do to repay you?"

"Assuredly, Demoiselle, the deed was of little consequence," demurred Fritz. He did not, however, let go of her hands.

"Oh, it was!" she asserted, raising dewy eyes to gaze adoringly into his. "It was everything!" She threw her arms around his neck, stretched up on tippytoes, and kissed him on the mouth, whereupon he changed into a little red carp, which she swallowed at one gulp.

The king's guards felt the rope go completely slack and pulled it in as fast as they could, but Fritz was gone.

"Well," said Rudy, "it falls to me to recover the magic cup and avenge my brothers Hans and Fritz." So Rudy curled his hair, buffed his nails, brushed his teeth and put on his best party clothes. Then he had the royal guards row him out into the lake.

"Ho there, mighty and mysterious denizen of the lake. Come, let us reason together."

Immediately the water began to roil and boil and a lissome maiden in di-

Artwork by Margaret Organ-Kean

aphanous robes rose from the lake, standing on a clamshell.

"Are you Rudy?" she sighed. "Hans and Fritz never told me you were so handsome. Oh, if only you would kiss me, I would give you anything you ask."

"Well, come here, Sweetie. I have a kiss just for you." Rudy swept her into his arms and kissed her on the mouth, whereupon he changed into a little red carp, which she swallowed at one gulp. Then, laughing nastily, she dove back into the lake.

When the royal guards told the king what had happened, he was devastated.

"I will give half my kingdom and the hand of my daughter, Bess, in marriage to anyone who will recover my magic cup and avenge my sons, Hans, Fritz and Rudy."

"Oh, for pity's sake!" snarled Bess, and stomped off.

Bess spent the rest of the day wandering around the palace, going up to the attic and down to the wine cellar, out to the stables and into the spare bedrooms. And everywhere she went she spoke to the spiders. That night, after everyone had left the dining room, she pushed the tables and chairs against the walls, scattered five pounds of salt on the floor, locked the door after her, and went to bed.

Early the next morning when she unlocked the dining room, she found that the spiders had spun the salt into a beautiful shimmery white cloak. Bess put flowers in her hair, pulled the cloak around her shoulders, and went walking along the lakeside, singing sad songs and mourning her brothers. Soon the lake began to roil and boil and the lissome maiden rose from the lake, standing on a clamshell.

She called out to Bess, "Princess, why do you weep?"

"My father has promised my hand in marriage to anyone who will recover his magic cup and avenge my brothers. What if the man who does it is ugly? Or boring? What if he never bathes? What if no one can do it? They'll hold me in escrow till I'm a dried-up old maid. Whatever shall I do?" Bess wrung her hands pathetically.

"Ah, Princess, I pity you," said the ondine. (For that is what the lissome maiden truly was.) "I will return your father's magic cup and free you from this nonsensical vow of his."

Artwork by Margaret Organ-Kean

She drew the cup from beneath her diaphanous robes and glided off the clamshell, leaving a slimy slippery trail as if a slug were walking about a bit.

"How can I repay you for your kindness?" cried Bess, clutching the cup to her bosom.

"A simple kiss of friendship —" began the ondine, with a hungry gleam in her eye.

"Oh no. That's not nearly enough. I'll give you my spider silk cloak." And holding the magic cup in her teeth, Bess whipped her cloak off her shoulders and wrapped it around the ondine. The five pounds of salt, which the spiders had spun into the robe, began to work. With terrible screams, the ondine dissolved into a puddle of slime, in the midst of which were three little red carp. Bess plucked them out and dropped them into the cup, whereupon they turned into Hans, Fritz, and Rudy.

The king was a man of his word, and though he hated to do it, he gave Bess half his kingdom and her own hand in marriage. Years later, she married a gypsy king and spent summers on the road with him, but that's another story.

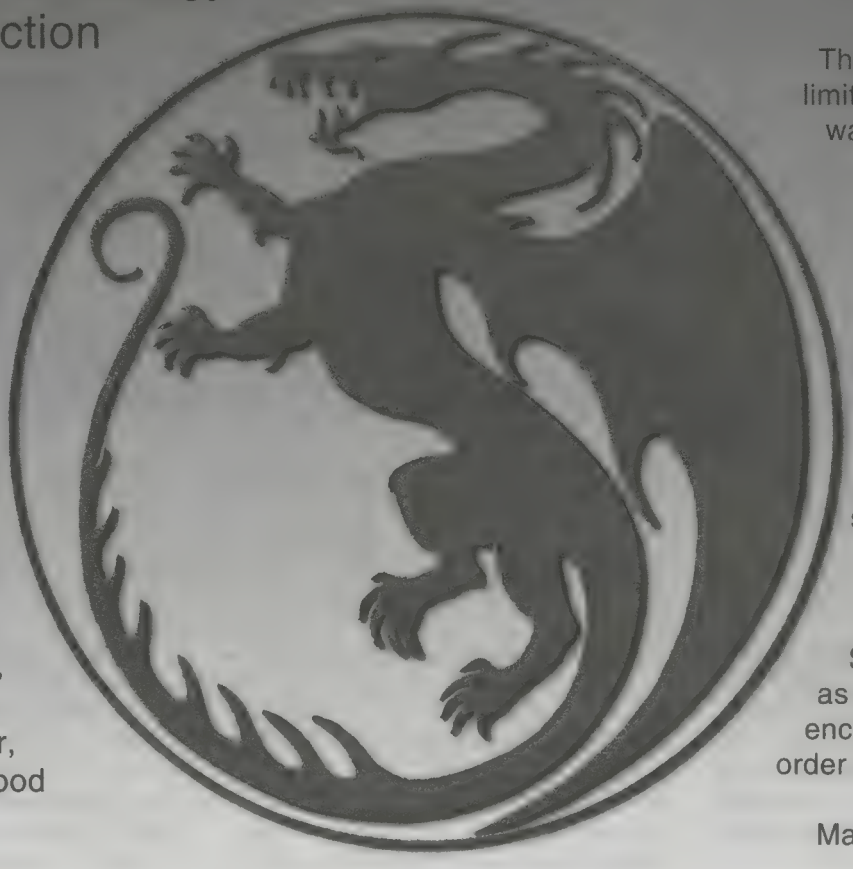
I wish I could say that they all lived happily ever after, but Hans and Fritz never ate fish again, and handsome Rudy never ever kissed another woman on the mouth. (Though he and his wife did have seven children and a long, successful marriage.) ❄

ROXANNA MATTHEWS writes: "My birthdate is three, four, five, oh! It's good that this is easy to remember, because when it comes to numbers, I have a mind like a steel sieve. I am happily married, six feet tall, a Certified Master Knitter and one of those odd women who tell jokes. My wonderful husband brings in the steady paycheck and encourages me in my knitting, weaving and spinning. This work gives me lots of time to think, and I often tell myself stories. Then I began writing them down.This is my first sale and I am positively giddy with pride and joy. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

MARGARET ORGAN-KEAN lives in Seattle with her husband, Bruce Durocher, and recently went freelance.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY WORLDS

a hardcover anthology
of fantasy fiction



Cover artwork
by Alicia Austin
limited edition
of 300 copies

Introductions by
Marion Zimmer
Bradley and
Rachel Holmen

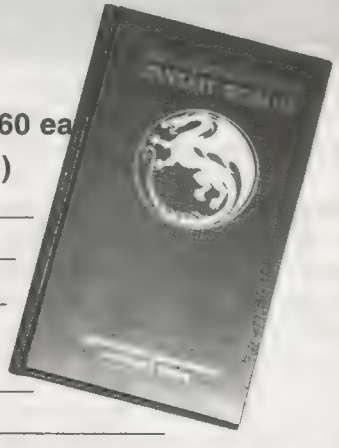
With stories by
Rosemary and
India Edghill,
Steven J. Piziks,
Dorothy J. Heydt,
Diana L. Paxson,
Deborah Wheeler,
Laura J. Underwood
and 12 others

This special hardcover, limited-edition anthology was created especially for Fantasy Worlds Festival.

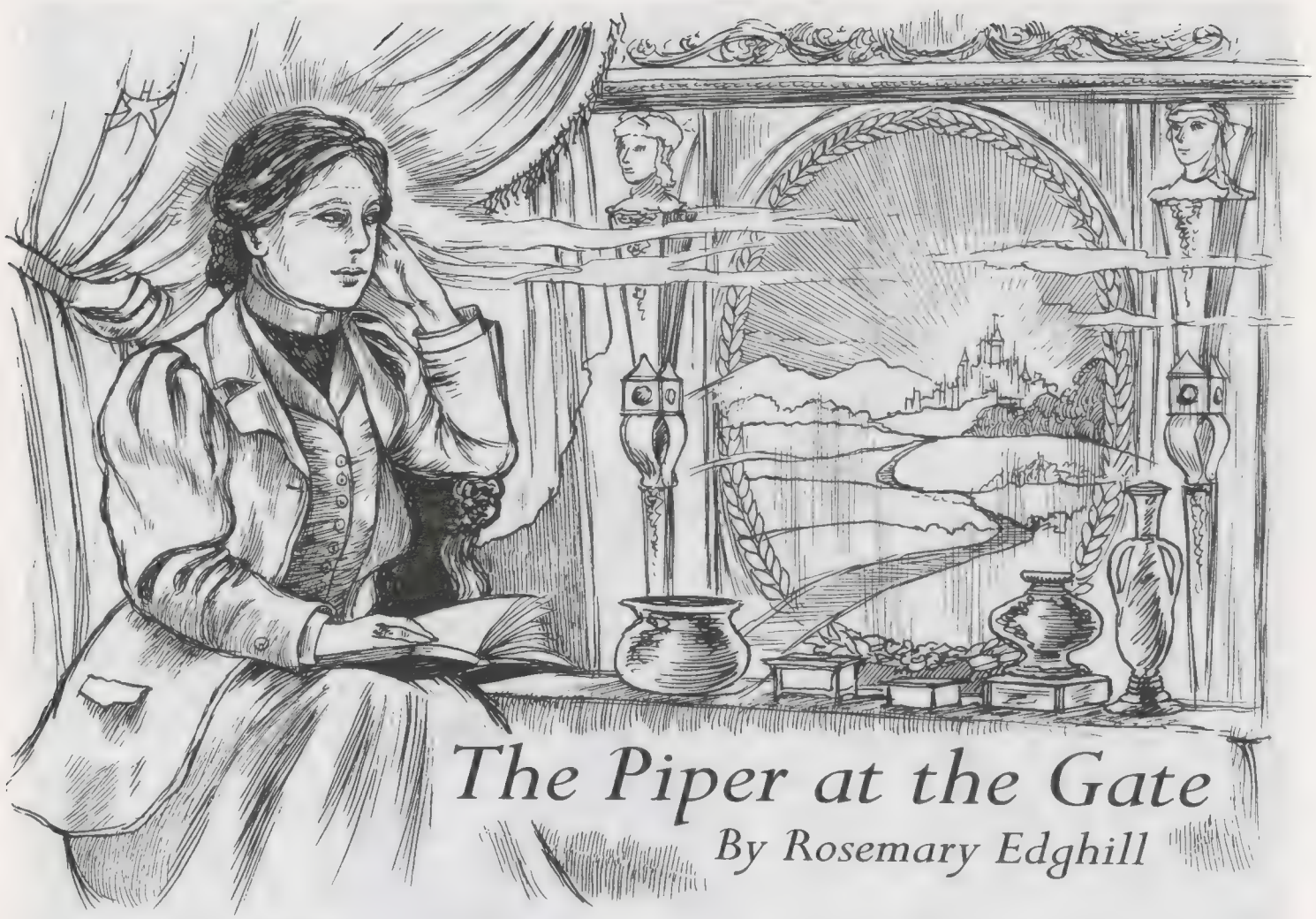
The cover features a copper-foil dragon by Alicia Austin, printed on a green cloth cover.

All books are signed by the editors and numbered.

Cost per book is $60.00, plus postage as noted below. Please enclose check or money order in U.S. currency and make payable to Marion Zimmer Bradley Living Trust.



Yes! **Please send me ___ copies of the Fantasy Worlds Anthology@$60 ea**
I have included ____ postage ($3.50 US, $5.00 Canada, $11.00 overseas)
Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Phone/e-mail: _____
❒Check enclosed **❒Visa/MC#** _____
signature: _____ **exp.** _____
Send your order and payment to: Marion Zimmer Bradley Ltd., PO Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249.



The Piper at the Gate

By Rosemary Edghill

Let us sing of arts and the woman.

True magic, says conventional wisdom, has always just tip-toed out of the world in one's grandfather's time, but it is far more likely — and reasonable — that true magic leaves the world in each of our several lifetimes, turning gold into lead in the split-infinity that our attention isn't on it. But to believe that is to believe that each of us is responsible for the magic going away, and so we are.

But if that is the case, then the opposite must also be true, and each of us, in our lives, can call the magic back …

Once upon a time a hundred years ago, she would have been known as something or other safe and indicative such as Mrs. Goodwrite (not her real name) and been plump, respectable, grey, chaste, and a writer (with a silver pen) of improving fantasies for children: moral, double-tongued tales that pimped for the dual Victorian linchpins of an expanding economic frontier and such an absolute certainty in Revealed Truth that anything could be spoken of — and as they did, they would dress themselves up with borrowed scraps of wildness that only tormented the appetite for Otherwhere birthed by the Industrial Revolution. Such tales would be gilded piety: authentic poisoned apples: false coin offered as true by a fellow victim of the same hungers. Like Mrs. Goodwrite, grey lady, penning her hopes of the Summer Country while, like some mad literary Tantalus, driving it farther from human grasp with every innocent well-meaning stroke of her pen.

And thus the wild night-lands beyond the Eidolon Gate could be trotted out, tamed, and destroyed by the very people who heard their silent music and bumbled heartsick without them through empty days.

But Mrs. Goodwrite died.

She died, her world died, the sun set upon the British Empire, hammered out under the sulphurous hooves of the angel horsemen of Mons, strangled in the subaqueous embrace of the Lusitania ladies that kiss enemy seacaptains to their deaths, fried in a thousand firestorms over a thousand home towns. At the end of the world, there were new legends, new haunts, one last guttering glare of magic, and then the world ground down from even that industrial enchantment. Another war followed the first, and in that utter desperate bleakness some few hammered on the Eidolon Gates, but it can be reliably reported by those in a position to know that the old wild magic was really and actually dead, and the Gates transmuted to cold iron, lath, and barbed wire.

So the fantasy writers of a new generation (coming to that antique Mimir's Well both poisoned and empty) took up their pens and … lied. The truth was too hard, too painful, elitist, uncommercial. The lie was more palatable, an easy populist mass-market success. But at least there was nothing in it to madden appetite for that which had slipped out of the world (as it always does) a generation before. At least betrayal, in

Artwork by Hannah M. G. Shapero

that sense and aspect, was over and done with.

But in some, unfed and unencouraged, the appetite remained.

Her name, in this generation, was Mary Frances Baynes. Unlike her spiritual ancestress Mrs. Goodwrite, she was neither fat nor grey. She was (reasonably) chaste but almost accidentally — Society did not compel her. She had no interest in children, or in improving them, and little interest in the tainted pool of Victorian fantastic literature. But like those who had gone before her, Mary Frances stood wistfully outside the Eidolon Gates, and hoped to be let in.

To say that she felt a stranger in her own time would not be entirely accurate. To be a stranger in one place also implies that there is a place where one is not a stranger, and Mary Frances did not believe such a place existed. She had made every overture to the world for forty years until her unchanging helpless indifference to it had broken her in this one small way: she no longer expected happiness. But she still believed.

In a place, equally strange, that she would like better than she did the place where she was now. Mary Frances and the world existed in a wary state of mutual truce. She had enough respect for the powers of the world not to try to shut it out, but she traveled light and kept her options open while she looked — carefully and meticulously — for a bolthole.

Her escape was not to be found in history. She knew enough history to know that the present day was much the best in terms of mercy, justice, and human comfort. History, while glorious, was not the refuge she sought.

Nor was it to be found in the future. By the time she got to as much of the future as she ever would, it would be the present, and Mary Frances already knew that the present did not suit her. The future would only be more so: more regimented, more materialistic, an unglamorous world of machines and poverty. The future held no hope.

Her refuge was not elsewhere in the world she knew. Every place there was had people, and if people could content her Mary Frances would already have been content.

But she was not content without people, either. Mary Frances was desperately lonely, and while the only form of companionship the world held had no power to ease her, the spirit finds its own easement. And so, cut off from past, present, and future, Mary Frances nonetheless found sanctuary.

In the world beyond the Eidolon Gate. The world of magic.

In her search she had run through (and given up on) the postwar fantasists — except for a handful (not the ones you think) who seemed out of a life's work to be able to produce one or two (it was usually two) books that at least matched pain to pain and hunger to hunger and fed a mad certainty that what she sought was there. In her seeking for the comfort of like minds she fled back through the brief century of fantastic literature and then off into the unsounded depths of archaeology, anthropology, folklore, fairy-tales, myth — searching, as much as she searched for the thing itself, for a time when people knew the Summer Country.

Effortlessly she sifted the fragments buried in the commonplace of their own times, and eased out the timeless truth. She knew what was trustworthy and what was dross weaving on a golden warp. And at last, grudgingly, inevitably, she began to write — composing, with jigsaw syncreticism, whole, simple, and flagrant accuracies of a time and place no more friendly than her own but capable, perhaps, of being loved.

To simplify the explanation — in fact, to *lie* — Mary Frances Baynes became a socially-maladjusted fantasy writer, spinner of half-truths for those who shared her hunger. Her need had remade her in its own image, as terrible and constant pain does its bearers.

Mary Frances Baynes lived in a small apartment that dated from the time between wars when the real world, too, had awaited its final breaking. The apartment had been acquired, and kept, at ruinous expense, for a certain slant of light through the bedroom windows in autumn and its cruel ability to over and over inspire the faint delusive hope that perhaps today, maybe ...

No. Never. The Eidolon Gate — never open, never *real* — was closed forever. To believe anything else was to court madness, and an even more unpleasant experience of the world. She knew that with a deadly certainty. But still Mary Frances Baynes wrote her careful books, and yearned for faery magic and faery lore.

And missed it, nearly, one day when it came.

Her apartment was in an old city, dating back to the first interlopers, and the layout of the streets showed that the city had used to be an assortment of villages set cattywampus each to each. The streets and avenues, grown finally to connect, made sharp, right-angle turns, or swept broadly around the boundaries of a village green that wasn't there any more. The apartment, as was right, was set on one of the streets most fraught with possibilities: one of the twistiest.

The day was June 23rd — St. John's Eve, not Midsummer's Day, is the time the Celidhe Court rides out in search of a bondsman to pay its seven years' teind. Some years ago on this date Mary Frances had spent the most mortifying night of her life wandering all about Glastonbury, goaded beyond rationality by heartsick hunger. Now the date only brought a faint, reflexive happiness; a wry self-goading: *if anything were ever to happen* (thing not specified, for rationality's sake) *it would happen today.*

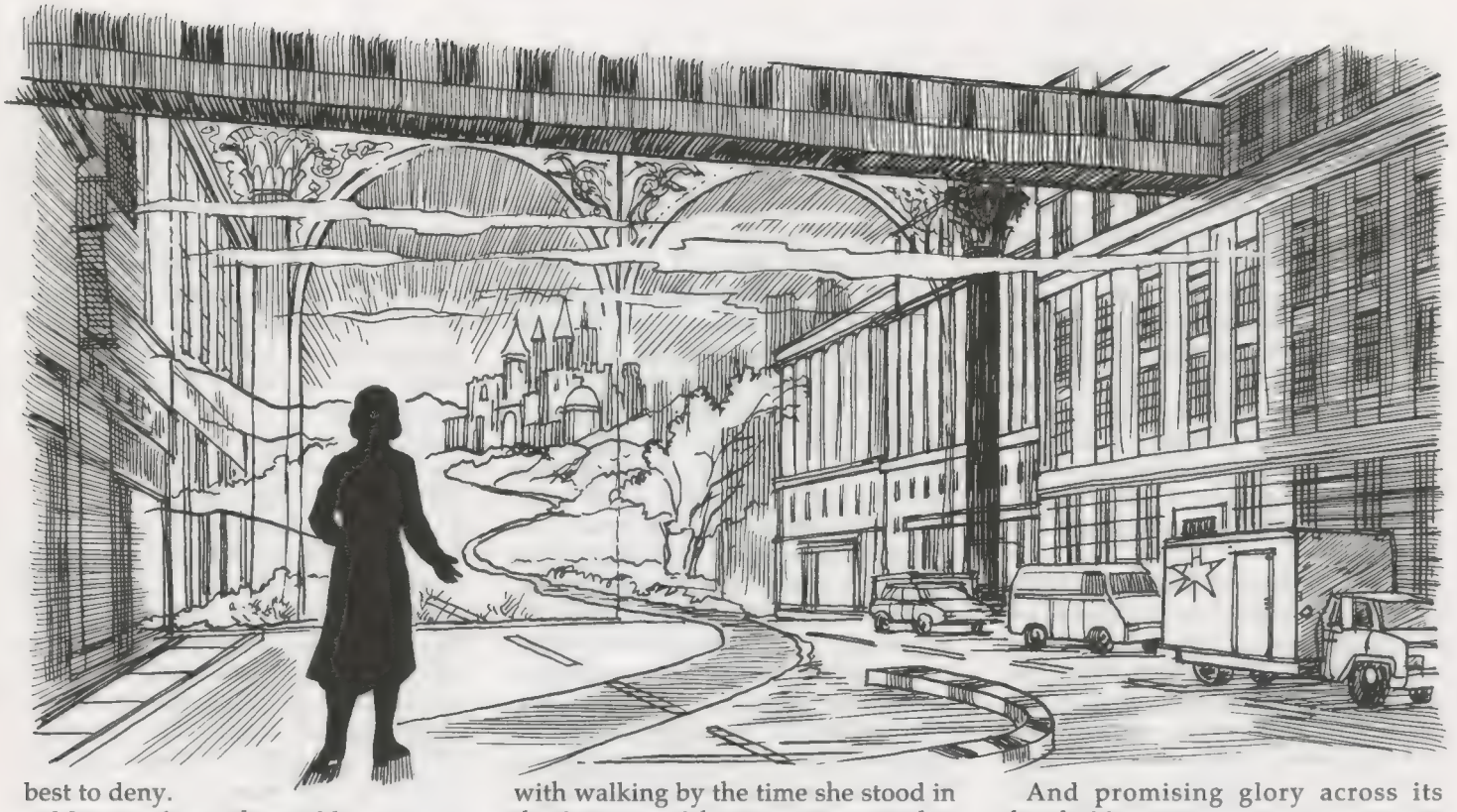
And it had.

It was a Wednesday. Her emergency (battery) clock woke her for work an hour late. Her electric clock stood mute at twelve-oh-one, deprived of power. She listened with her head cocked. No subaural rumble of traffic and trains. The phone did not work, and there was neither television nor radio to tell her of the world as it had suddenly become.

Imagination crossed, stepping-stonewise, from the familiar to the improbable. Even alien invasion was considered and rejected. Aliens would be noisier. At last, in the mechanical silence, worry bred irritation that spawned a license to go and see. She dressed, carefully and pragmatically, in her work clothes, and left her apartment, prepared to see anything.

Wednesday June 23rd was a day extraordinary in its ordinariness. The sun was shining, and the streets were as deserted as if half the city's population had vanished mysteriously in the night. Reaching the street she saw only one person upon it, who ducked his head into his overcoat and scuttled away. She saw no cars at all.

And now, fugitively, came the lightness and hope, hung upon a thousand meteorological irrelevancies, and what her senses told her that her mind did its



best to deny.

Magic is afoot in the world.

Mary Frances walked with careful measured steps toward the wide broad avenue that marked the border of her consciously quaint domain, out of the shadows, out into the sun. When she saw what was there, she caught her breath. Tears forced out by hope fulfilled trickled down her face. A dozen blocks north the Eidolon Gate straddled four lanes of traffic, looking precisely as she had known it would. Mary Frances Baynes stood in the borderlands and looked out over the Summer Country, standing in a world to which Magic had come again.

Beyond the Gate the city both was and was not, an illusion growing more unconvincing with each heartbeat. Beyond the Gate the land was the rolling green, and she did not need to see the fields beyond to know that there was a path of white stone that led through them, or to know that the path led, in its time, to a forest that led down to the sea seen only in dreams from which there is no waking. She knew these things without seeing them, because all she had ever hoped for, wished, and dreamed was here. Waiting for her.

She could clearly see the shops that stood this side of the Gate, and knew that it was a matter of only twenty minutes' walk to reach them. But on this particular day the journey seemed to encompass some revised and unstrung form of time, and her legs ached with walking by the time she stood in the doorway of the corner grocer's that this of all mornings had not opened its doors nor unfurled its awning to greet its early-morning customers.

And the Gate was before her. Close enough to touch. Close enough for her to run and fling her arms about the pillars of horn/ivory/alabaster; to press her cheek against magic made incontrovertible and placed in the world. And she was afraid.

In all the long years of her imprecise exile, it was always to have been enough that the magic was real — as if it could be, could have ever been, real. But now here it was. The Gates were here. Beyond them, as matter-of-fact as what-you-will, lay the Summer Country whose being had in song and legend once marched interlocked with that of Mary Frances' world.

By its blatant corporeality the Gate seemed to call for some heroic action from her in return, because its very existence was happiness, she had always said so, and now happiness could be achieved ...

There seemed to be no sound in all the city. The wind, unaccustomedly sweet, blew unchallenged through engineered canyons and artificial menhirs. Hot mid-morning sun cleaned and gilded every surface. The Gate stood, hard magic, crossing all four asphaulted lanes of the wide avenue, shearing through sidewalk and building as though they were thin air —

And promising glory across its threshold.

With as much reluctance as if she hated it, Mary Frances took a step toward the Gate. Her nose was precisely even with the sharp thin line (golden with reflected sunlight) that marked where one-half the Gate precisely met the other half. The panels were twice her height, carved with fantastic beasts that held rings of carved and gilded opal in their mouths. They dangled just above her head; well within reach. To use. To summon. To open.

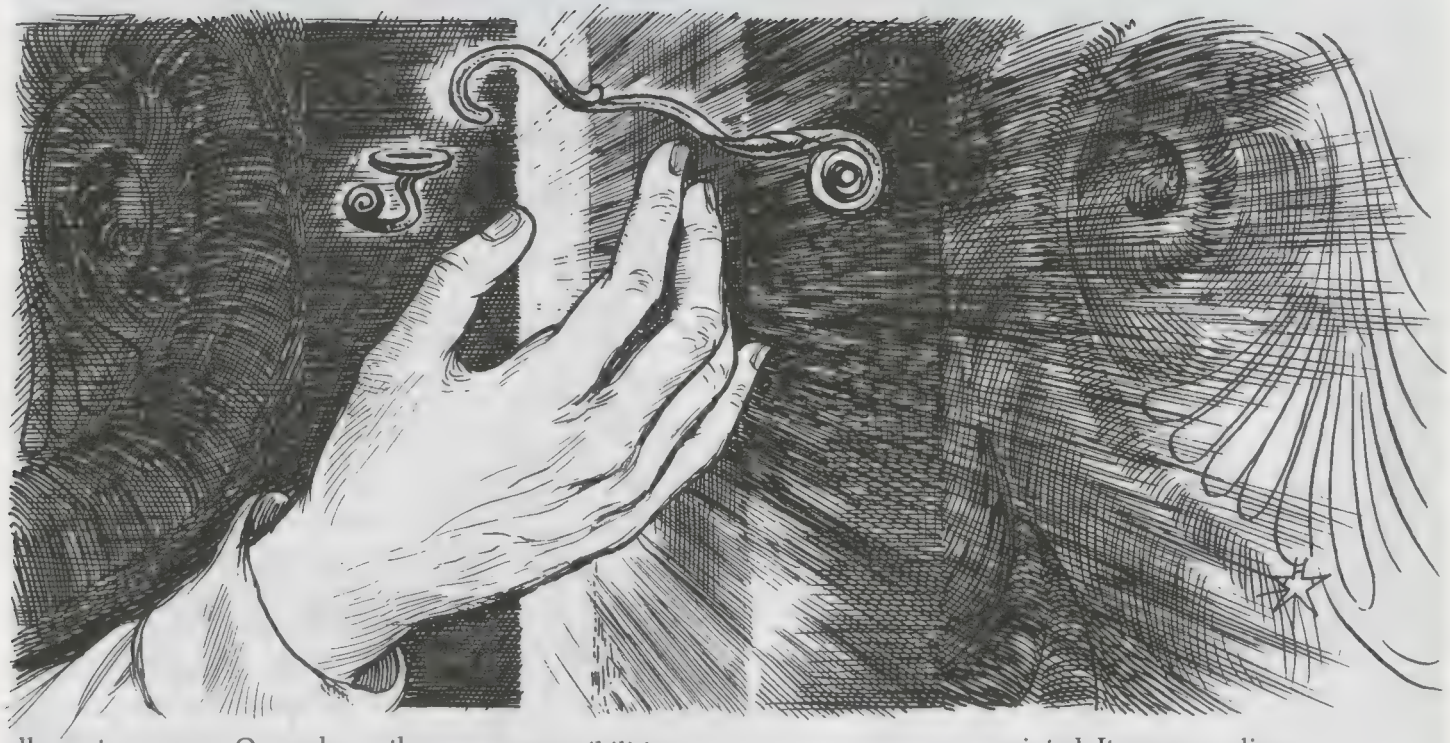
And just at the level of her heart, blinding gold in the morning sun, was a small hook-latch. Ludicrous in its delicacy, risible in its temerity, pathetic in its ineffectuality.

Magic had returned to the world. Once more faery lands marched with mortal. One push, and she would be a citizen of that far country.

Mary Frances put her hand upon the ridiculous latch and stopped. The little latch was hot under her hand, hotter by far than the Gate it was set in, hotter than it had a right to be in such mild morning sun. A spasm of her fingers, largely unwilled, flipped it free, and the Eidolon Gate trembled, openable, beneath her hand.

No sweet ache or desperate melancholy was kindled from this proximity to the fulfillment of all impossible hopes, because now all desire might-be-could-be-would-be filled. Slaked and explained, obviated and solved,

Artwork by Hannah M. G. Shapero



all mystery gone. Or perhaps there would always be mystery, the sweet wild mystery that was once the human birthright, before expediency had destroyed it. Whose battering down and selling off Mary Frances had mourned and researched, wailing for her demon lover across the pages of a score of agonized invocations.

And now he was here. He could be here, just beyond the Gate, waiting for her and what gifts she could bring him from clockwork lands. She stood with her hand upon the Gate, with nothing but her will between her and all she had ever wanted.

It was hard to imagine moving forward. Her pain was all that defined her. Without it she would be a turtle without a shell, a jellyfish without an ocean. She realized in that moment that she was defined by all that she was *not*, and that to seek happiness at last, however she did it, was a kind of dying.

She didn't care. She had been ground down through the long years by a quiet painful unhappiness, till the indifference it created was in itself a form of bravery. If it were the only heroic act in her life, she would make this choice. Closing her eyes, holding her breath, Mary Francis pushed open the Gate.

And walked through into magic.

The EMTs had been called, though there was no possibility of resuscitation. But bodies cannot just be left lying around. Even in death, one still has responsibilities.

"Who do you suppose she was?" Dave asked idly, looking down at the body in the bed. Heart attack, but they'd been lucky: the a/c was turned way up, and her cleaning lady had discovered her within hours of death.

"M. F. Baynes," his partner replied, glancing at her clipboard. Her face was sad. "Jesus, Dave, don't you read anything but skin magazines? She was an author. She wrote books. I used to read her all the time when I was a kid."

"Your kind of books, Hol?" David Shepherd replied. "Pink unicorns and trolls and stuff?"

"No," said Holly. "They were better than that. They were almost real. I'm sorry she's dead."

"Everybody dies," Dave said, with the callousness of one for whom death, in some sense, is his profession. A lot of an EMT's life was spent driving nervous senior citizens to the Emergency Room, but more was spent with those who had suddenly and unexpectedly left Life behind, usually in messier ways than this. "Okay. You ready?"

"Ready."

The two of them lifted the body onto the gurney, and carefully tucked the blanket around it before strapping it in. Straightening up, Dave took a last look around the apartment. It didn't look much like the kind of place he'd expect a fantasy writer to live. No posters on the walls, no statues of dragons on the tables. He felt a little disappointed. It was so ordinary.

"You ever wonder where they go? Heaven or hell?" he asked idly.

"Writers? Or just people?" Holly Kendall asked. "I dunno. Maybe writers — if they're lucky — get to go live in their own books when they die. I'd like to think so."

"I guess," Dave said vaguely. He turned the gurney around and began pulling it toward the door. As Holly had implied, he wasn't much of a reader. Not of fantasy, anyway. Dave liked books to be about things he could see and touch. Just then, a last thought struck him.

"But do you think that would be Heaven ... or Hell?"

❄

Rosemary Edghill has published a spate of Regency novels including **TURKISH DELIGHT** and **FLEETING FANCY**; detective novels **SPEAK DAGGERS TO HER**, **BOOK OF MOONS**, and **THE BOWL OF NIGHT**; and a fantasy series including **THE SWORD OF MAIDEN'S TEARS**, **THE CUP OF MORNING SHADOWS**, and **THE CLOAK OF NIGHT AND DAGGERS**. She has had stories published in *Dragon Magazine*, **SWORD AND SORCERESS VIII**, and this magazine.

Hannah M. G. Shapero produces fantasy, science fiction, and commercial art. She is also an accomplished birdwatcher and gourmet cook (when not on the road, stuck in commute traffic en route to her studio).

Artwork by Hannah M. G. Shapero

The National Best-selling Series

Now in Paperback...

The conclusion to Lackey & Dixon's acclaimed *Owl* trilogy.

Two years after his parents disappearance, Darian has sought refuge and training from the mysterious Hawkbrothers. Now he has opened his heart to a beautiful young healer and found peace and acceptance in his life. That is, until he learns that his parents may still be alive—and trapped behind enemy borders...

0-88677-916-2/$6.99

Praise for the Owl Trilogy:

"*Owlsight* will bring new fans into the fold and please those who already love the land of Valdemar."
—*Starlog*

"Vintage Mercedes Lackey."
—*Voya*

"A pleasing coming-of-age adventure featuring an appealing set of characters."
—*Romantic Times*

Don't miss the previous two volumes in the trilogy:

Owlflight
0-88677-804-2/$6.99

Owlsight
0-88677-803-4/$6.99

Available wherever books are sold.

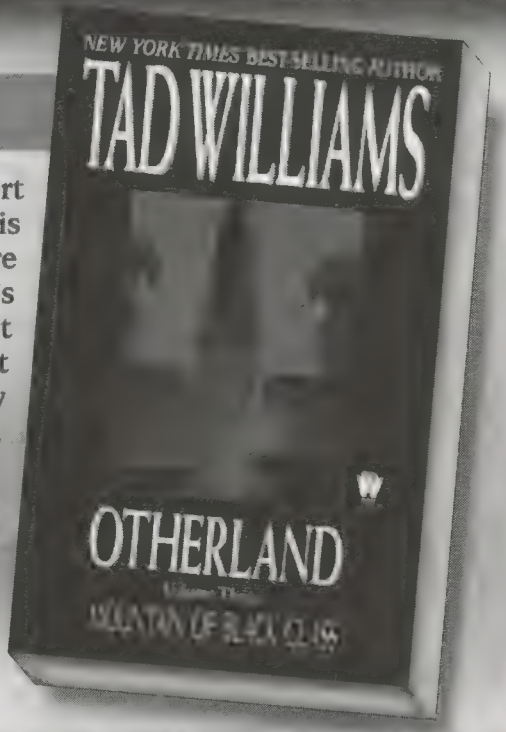
Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com

FROM *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR TAD WILLIAMS

Now in Paperback!

As our small band of heroes gathers in the heart of Homer's Troy, they know that their quest is running perilously short of time. And before they can hope to stop the Brotherhood's ruthless bid for immortality, they must first confront Otherland's darkest secret—an entity known only as the Other....

0-88677-906-5/$7.99

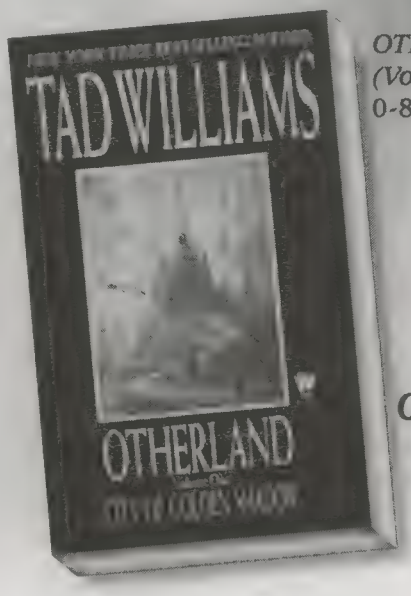


Praise for *OTHERLAND*:

"On an epic scale and most impressive of all is *OTHERLAND*, a big colorful novel full of real-world conspiracy and virtual reality wonders, with characters worth caring about."
—*Locus*

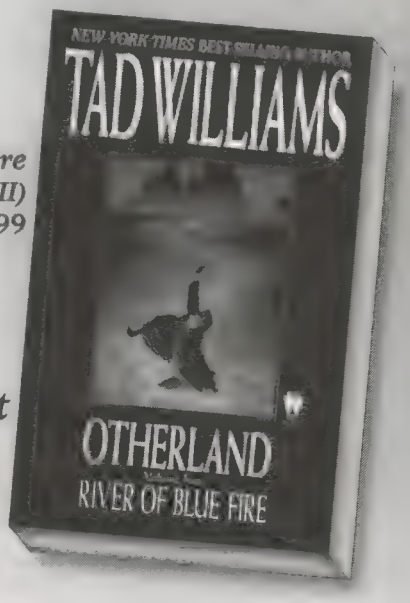
"This is the best thing Williams has ever done, and it deserves attention, time, praise. More, it deserves to be read." —*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*

Don't miss:



OTHERLAND: City of Golden Shadow
(Volume I)
0-88677-763-1/$7.99

OTHERLAND: River of Blue Fire
(Volume II)
0-88677-844-1/$7.99



Available wherever books are sold.

And coming in April 2001:

OTHERLAND: Sea of Silver Light
***OTHERLAND*'s Final Volume!**

DAW

DAW Books, Inc.
Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com

A Cobbler's Love Story

By Jeffrey Bouthiette

I had always wanted to be a dragon. But no, "You must be a cobbler. You will inherit the shop. We have a business to run." My father. A big, ugly-brown man. I loved his work apron. "You will be married. Your children will run the shop after you. We'll live well. You'll be happy."

Come, peasant-child. The sun is bright, the breeze cool. Come and dance. The music waits for you. We wait for you.

Click-clack. The little hammer sounded as the leather came together. I learned. I learned about shoes, the pieces of fabric taking shape. Becoming. Mountains of shoes. The dyes and the clasps, the shape of the soles. Mostly cheap, rough-made boots. Occasionally something fancy. And once in a while, a true masterpiece, a pair requested by some merchant or minor noble. Made of the finest fabric, with silver clasps. Requiring real work. Not often. Maybe once a year.

There's a warm fire waiting for you when the snow falls. It is spring in the meadow. Join us.

The brown in my father was turning gray, bit by bit. He tried not to notice. He was taking longer and longer, and giving more of the work to me. He was getting older. As was I. I had almost forgotten my dragon. My beard started to come in. My father tried not to notice that, too.

Are you the cobbler? The question came from a purple-clad figure standing in my doorway. The shadows hid its face and attire from me.

"I'm his son, but I've taken on most of his work. Shall I call for him?" I squinted into the darkness.

"No, no. I am quite sure you can help me." As she spoke, she stepped forward into the torch light. She was a beautiful woman in a long satin gown. Her large brown eyes caught my gaze for a moment, but it was soon drawn to the sparkling orb which hung on a golden chain around her neck. I was entranced by the song of this crystal sphere.

"Sir?"

"I'm sorry, madam. What can I do for you?"

Her eyes sparkled as she laughed lightly, like a harp. "What do you think, sir? I need a pair of shoes. For my mistress. You will be paid well, of course."

The flute plays in the forest. The wind sings in harmony. The circle gathers. We dance out under the moon, sometimes.

It took a year for the materials to arrive. I worked for a month and a day on those shoes. Every stitch in silver thread needed to be exquisite. Each of the gold clasps had to be perfectly aligned. The material was of the finest quality; soft in texture yet strong enough to last one hundred years of rough use.

For a month and a day I worked on those shoes. Then I waited.

Sir?

Once again the purple-clad figure appeared in the doorway.

I jumped up from the work table, and brought out the box from its hiding place. She approached me and took the cover off the top. She took one shoe out and examined it. I watched her.

"They're beautiful, sir. My mistress will be pleased." I thought I caught a sparkle of humor in her eyes. "Now for your payment."

Artwork by Katy Winters

Artwork by Katy Winters

She reached behind her long brown hair and removed the gold chain from her neck. She took my hand and placed the crystal orb on my palm.

"One wish, my lord."

The fairies fly the circle widdershins. The trout jump from the pool. The music grows faint. The owl and the squirrel whisper. "One wish, one wish ..."

Okay, let's get one thing straight. I do not eat people. I have never tasted human flesh. I have no desire to. I don't ravage land. I stick strictly to forest predators. Domesticated sheep tastes absolutely atrocious. I have specifically avoided virgin princesses.

I will admit, it was exhilarating at first. I mean, I could fly! There is nothing so breathtaking as soaring above a snow-covered mountain range. And the whole breathing-fire thing was kind of interesting.

But there was a definite downside. People tended to be quite afraid of me. My father certainly was. Plus, there aren't many dragons left, you know. Companionship with another dragon really didn't seem feasible. So, after a year or so of flying around in search of other dragons, I began to remember a story my older sister once told to me .

My sister had always been very good to me. She was put in charge of the household when mother died, and she always put me to bed with a story mother had told her. My favorite, of course, was a story about a dragon.

"Now, Mum always swore this to be true," she began every time. "She swore on her grave. She made me promise I'd tell it to you when she was gone. So, here goes.

"Once, there was a young dragon whose parents had died, and he was awfully lonely. Well, one day he was flying over a village and the peasants were having a big festival." Then my sister would sing a pretty little ditty about a rooster. She had the sweetest voice.

"The villagers were dancing to that song. The dragon, well, he saw how much fun they were having, and desperately wanted to be one of them. He remembered an old legend, that if a virgin of noble blood were to truly care for a dragon, it would become human. Well, he swooped to the nearest castle and stole away the youngest daughter of the king.

"In the dragon's cave, the princess slowly began to fall in love with him. One day, she kissed him, and he became a handsome young man. She led him out of the cave to her father, the king. They were soon married, and lived happily ever after."

That was always my favorite story, and I thought perhaps it just might work. "A virgin of noble blood." So I swooped to the nearest castle and stole away the king's *youngest daughter. I, ho*wever, got more than I bargained for.

"I want to go home!" The shrill shriek pierced the thick night air, and it seemed nearly impossible that the cry had come from the dainty figure in front of me. The small blonde waif was a beautiful specimen, to be sure.

"No." I eyed her warily.

Artwork by Katy Winters

"Hah! Oh, you just wait. Just wait and see! Daddy will send my betrothed to kill you. I am engaged to Sir Lancelot of the Lake, the greatest knight in the three kingdoms. He will cut your head off and mount it on my bedroom wall!"

Thus began my association with the darling girl who was supposed to fall in love with me.

Of course, Sir Lancelot did eventually come to rescue his betrothed. By that time, though, I had pretty much given up on her. A couple of demonstrations of my ability to breathe fire had shut up her annoying whining. No one can withstand threats from a dragon for too long. Now she just sat in the corner glaring at me.

It was mid-afternoon one day when Sir Lancelot came riding in. I must admit, he was a figure to behold. He was mounted on a tall black stallion. He wore no armor and was, in fact, shirtless except for two leather straps crossing his chest. His blond hair rustled in the breeze. He rode to the mouth of the cave and issued his challenge.

"Dragon, come forth and surrender the princess, or prepare for combat."

I slinked out of the cave in defeat. The princess ran to her betrothed and threw herself at him,

"You can take her, good knight," I said. "She has been nothing but trouble for me."

Sir Lancelot contemplated my words, glancing at his fiancee. Finally, he spoke. "Then, dragon, I will leave you in peace. If —"

"NO!" I could have recognized that shrill scream anywhere. It was most certainly the princess. As I turned to her, I felt a sharp pain in my side and my legs fell out from under me. As I toppled to the ground, I realized what had happened. She had grabbed a knife from the side of her betrothed and taken her revenge out on my hide.

Sir Lancelot ran to my side, inspecting the wound and urging me to speak. It took a few minutes, as I was trying to compose some suitable last words. I don't remember exactly what I said, but it was something like "Remember me, for I was once a man." Whatever it was, it brought tears to Sir Lancelot's eyes.

Sir Lancelot knelt down to my face and kissed me on the cheek. As he did, a miracle happened. All my scales and my wings melted away to dust, and I was a man again.

As a man, I looked into my knight's gorgeous blue eyes and said, "Kiss me again." He tenderly touched his lips to mine. I thought it would last forever. It very nearly did.

Sir Lancelot tended to my wounds and brought me to his castle where we, of course, lived happily ever after. In quite magnificent opulence, I might add. I don't really know what happened to the princess. I'm happy to live in ignorance of her fate.

Imagine, saved from dragonhood by the great Sir Lancelot du Lac! "A virgin of noble blood." Not that my knight will be running off to rescue any other dragons. I'm afraid that the job description no longer applies.

❄

JEFFREY BOUTHIETTE is in his fourth year at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. In addition to his writing, Jeff also devotes his time to playwriting, acting, directing, singing, composing, and playing the piano. He is dreading his entry into "reality" come May, but is nevertheless excited and ecstatic at the thought of graduation. Although this is Jeff's first published short story, the Brandeis Ensemble Theatre recently produced one of his one-act plays, entitled *Try Me*. In the spring of 2001, he will be performing his one-man show, which will be an adaptation of several Greek dramas and will include many original musical compositions. Besides that, he will be spending his time looking for a pet.

KATY WINTERS is a freelance illustrator and product designer. She lives near Philadelphia, PA, and teaches etching at Community Art Center in Wallingford, PA. She displays her work in shows and galleries — look for her at PhilCon.

Join ASFA!

Membership in ASFA, the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists, the group which gives out the Chesley Awards, is open to anyone.

The primary goal of ASFA is to share information that is of value to artists and art appreciators. Membership costs $30.00 a year, payable to ASFA, P.O. Box 151311, Arlington TX 76015-7311, and includes their quarterly newsletter and a free web page with room for five illustrations.

A Dragon in the Industry

by Caitlin Moriarity

The Princess Larana watched in absolute boredom from her cage as the prince fought her dragon captor. Neither of them was doing anything interesting; the prince was using the customary hack-and-slash technique, and the dragon just kept trying to bite him. When she couldn't make herself watch any longer, she started throwing small pebbles at a spot on the wall. She'd been doing it for the entire five days she'd been there, and had gotten pretty good at it.

"Got you!" cried the prince triumphantly. Larana looked over to see the prince atop the dragon's neck, his sword poised to strike. She sighed. She *really* didn't want to marry this twit. It was obvious, from his sword technique and vocabulary, that he had the intelligence of a tub of butter.

"Now I kill you, dragon!" the prince yelled, and raised his sword higher.

"WHAT??!!!!" shrieked the dragon. "That wasn't part of the deal I made with King Richard!"

Larana started; the dragon and her father had made a deal? She needed to find out more, but unfortunately her primary source of information was about to be skewered.

The prince began to bring his sword down to plunge it into the dragon's neck. Quickly, Larana picked up the largest pebble available, chucked it at the prince, and hoped that her aim really *had* improved with all the practice.

It had. The stone caught the prince square in the temple, and knocked him off the dragon's neck. If the blow to the head hadn't killed him, then having his head bitten off by the dragon did.

"Ptooey!" went the dragon, spitting the head clear across the cavern. "Ick ick ick. I'll be tasting human for a week! Ugh, why do they have to taste so horrible!"

That particular statement relieved Larana greatly.

The dragon turned to Larana. "I suppose I should thank you."

"Well actually, I'd rather you let me out of this cage," Larana answered.

"Oh, of course. Where are my manners?" the dragon reached down and opened the cage door.

"Thank you," said Larana, as she stretched thoroughly — the cage had been a tad cramped. "Now, about this 'deal' you made with my dear old dad?" she prompted.

"Oh, that." The dragon looked down sheepishly. "Well, it's like this. Your father approached me one day and offered to pay me substantially if I carried you off and held you captive for a while. It seems he was having trouble finding you a husband, and since any princess — any female, for that matter — being held by a dragon attracts princes like flies … But the prince wasn't supposed to try and kill me, he was just supposed to beat me! And then I'd let you go, and you two could get married."

"I see," Larana said blandly.

"I would have said no if the king hadn't offered to pay me," the dragon confessed. "But I needed the money. You aren't taken seriously in dragon society unless you've amassed a goodly amount of treasure, or bested several dozen knights.

Artwork by Norman Felchle

I'm not much of a fighter, though."

So I noticed, was Larana's first thought, but she voiced her second one instead.

"So you struck a deal with my father?" Larana asked incredulously. "Without getting payment in advance *or* having him sign a contract? My dear ... dragon, you were practically begging to be cheated!"

"I didn't know that," the dragon said sullenly, and then looked at her. "How come you know all that stuff about business? I didn't think princesses were supposed to learn things like that."

"Why do you think my father is having so much trouble marrying me off?" Larana countered.

"Good point." The dragon sighed. "Now what am I going to do? I can't stay here, not after killing that prince."

"I know what you mean. The idea of sticking around here doesn't particularly thrill me, either." Larana heaved a sigh of her own.

"The worst part is, I don't even have any treasure to show for it, and no idea how I can earn any." The dragon looked utterly crestfallen.

Larana grew thoughtful. "You know, I don't like the way my father tried to get me a husband, but the idea that that princes will always try to rescue and marry a dragon's captive ... that has possibilities."

The dragon suddenly became extremely interested. "Do tell."

"— And so that is why I must marry a prince," the peasant maid speaking to Larana finished. Larana's head snapped up quickly. She'd been on the verge of falling asleep, the girl's story was that tiresome. Larana could hear the faint sound of snoring coming from the dragon's hiding place. She figured, though, that they'd better get used to it.

Composing herself, Larana smiled. "Well, you've come to the right place. We at Happily Ever After, Inc. guarantee that with our program of simulated dragon captivity, princes will be fighting for your hand. And since we don't require payment until after you're married, there's no risk."

"Really?" asked the girl, excitedly.

"Absolutely. All you need to do is sign a contract," Larana held up the legal document, "stating that in the event of your marriage to a prince, you pay the agreed-upon fee to the company. Basically, if you don't get married, we don't get paid."

The girl didn't even hesitate. She grabbed the proffered quill and contract. "Where do I sign?"

❄

Caitlin L. Moriarity is a journalism major at the University of Missouri-Columbia. When she isn't writing sf/fantasy, she's reading it, or out book hunting. The idea for this story came to her one night in the shower, and she stayed up late writing it when she should have been studying for a journalism exam. This is her first professional sale.

Norman Felchle graduated from the California College of Arts and Crafts. He has since worked for Marvel, DC, SEGA, Electronic Arts, Microsoft, Novell, Mastercard, Industrial Light and Magic, and many other clients.

Artwork by Norman Felchle

WRITERS TALK BACK:

CONTACT!

by Steven Piziks

The McNamara Building in downtown Detroit doesn't look like it's full of people with guns. It's a fairly tall, standard gray skyscraper with a really ugly sculpture out front made of smashed-up cars set in a vaguely Stonehengian arrangement. I parked my car and dropped quarters into the meter. For a wonder, I was wearing a shirt with a button-down collar, slacks, and decent shoes instead of my more usual ragged shorts and torn t-shirt. Under my arm I carried a zippered leather folder.

You want to look nice when you're interviewing the FBI.

When you enter the lobby of the McNamara Building, all your stuff goes through an x-ray machine and you go through a metal detector. The guards are polite, friendly, and watchful. A creaky, shuddering elevator took me up past the Treasury Department and the IRS to the twenty-sixth floor and the FBI.

In the elevator foyer are pictures and descriptions of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted. Bin Laden is still on the list, in case you were curious. You have to pass through another metal detector to get into the reception area. This one doesn't give you the chance to empty your pockets, so your keys and change set off the alarm. (I rather suspect it's less for safety and more to alert the receptionists, who are behind bullet glass, to your presence.) I walked up to the bullet glass with a polite smile on my face and my card in my hand.

The things I do for research.

When you say "research", most people think of a pale person sitting at a table paging through a stack of musty books with one hand and taking frantic notes with the other. Sometimes this is the case. Unfortunately, however, books can't answer direct questions, and often as I'm paging through some dusty tome trying to find out just when the ground was broken on Ann Arbor's first cemetery, I find myself saying, "This is the sort of thing I could find out in less than ten seconds if I could just *ask* someone."

Talking to people to get information is often faster and more efficient than flipping through a book. Living people can also answer questions and bring up further facts you never knew to ask about. But just how do you find someone to talk to? And how do you ask? Won't they get mad that you're bothering them? How much do you pay them? What's the etiquette at an interview? These are some daunting questions, so let's take them one at a time.

The first step, obviously, is finding someone to consult. Sometimes you just get lucky. My first book was a science fiction novel about a man with multiple personality disorder (MPD). I read everything I could get my hands on, but there were a lot of things the books didn't say. As it happened, my wife was taking a psychology class at the time and she mentioned my book to the professor. He was fascinated! MPD, it turned out, was his specialty. When I heard about this, I promptly called the psych department to find out when his office hours were and I went down to talk to him the following day. As I said — lucky.

Luck, of course, doesn't work all the time. A more reliable way to find contacts is simply to ask all your friends and family if they know anything about the field you're researching. You'd be surprised at some of the contacts you can find this way. ("Didn't you know your great-uncle Ben worked as a lumberjack for fifteen years?") Even if this doesn't yield a direct contact, it can lead you to the friend-of-a-friend system. When I first expressed interest in contacting the FBI, for example, a friend of mine told me his parents knew an FBI agent assigned to the Kalamazoo Field Office. Contact!

You can also do a cold contacts. This involves getting hold of people you've never heard of (and vice-versa), and it often calls for some preliminary research. I was working on a piece involving botanical cloning, and the friend-of-a-friend system was proving a dead end. I live in Ann Arbor, home to the University of Michigan, so obviously the next step was to track down the botanical laboratory.

I called University information to get the location and went down for a quick visit. The receptionist was quite busy and verged on being rude, so I didn't tell her I was a writer looking for information. Instead I asked for any flyers or booklets about the biology department. The catalog she gave me to look at (she said I couldn't keep it) listed all the professors and their specialty areas. I copied down several names and phone numbers, thanked her sweetly, and left. Over the next few days, I made phone calls until I located a researcher who was working on a botanical DNA project and was able to make an appointment for an interview.

Do I get nervous calling people I don't know? You bet! I need the information, though, so I force myself to push those phone buttons. I have a tendency to babble when I'm edgy, so I often write out what I want to say in advance in case I start blithering or stuttering. When my source picks up the phone, I simply say (or read), "My

name is Steven Piziks. I'm a novelist, and the book I'm currently working on involves Medieval English cooking methods. I heard you would be a good person to talk to about this. Would you be able to answer a few questions?"

A note here: I introduce myself as a novelist, never a writer. The reason for this is that the word "writer" is often associated with "starving" or "wannabe" or "failing". The word "novelist", however, has a more brisk, down-to-earth connotation. It boils down to the preconception that writers are artists (and therefore slightly suspect) while novelists are businesspeople. If you're not a novelist and are doing research for a short story, say instead, "I'm working on a short story for submission to —." And name the magazine you intend to submit the story to. Again, this makes you sound more businesslike — you already have a market in mind.

So you've done the preliminary research and are making the call. What if the contact is rude or unwilling to talk to you? The situation can still be salvaged: "No problem. Sorry to have bothered you. Can you, perhaps, recommend someone else I could talk to? I'd really appreciate it."

Let's assume, however, that your contact *is* willing to talk to you. Most of them will be. You are a writer — er, *novelist*, something many people find endlessly fascinating. You're also giving them a chance to lecture about their fields of expertise. People love talking about themselves and their work, especially if what they say has a chance of ending up in print.

> Ask all your friends and family if they know anything about the field you're researching.

If you only have a few quick questions, a phone consultation will often do. ("It'll only take about five minutes. Is now a good time or should I call you back?") If you need something a little more elaborate, ask if you can make an appointment. You need to be flexible and operate at their convenience, of course. Remember, *they* are doing *you* a favor.

Some people will offer to consult via e-mail. This can work well if your contact is far away, making telephone calls expensive and personal interviews impossible. The problem you may run into, however, is that people often give too little detail in e-mail. They may be willing to go on for several minutes in person, but only give a terse, one-sentence answer if they have to write it down. Be prepared to reply with a polite request for more detail.

Now let's assume you've set up an interview. That brings up the question of mechanics — what to wear, what to bring, and so on. If you're talking to a total stranger in an office-like setting or in a private home, you'll want to dress up a bit. I normally never wear slacks, but you can bet I did when I talked to the FBI! On the other hand, if you're going to be in a barn talking to a farmer about the care and feeding of horses, your best bet is blue jeans, boots, and a flannel shirt. If you aren't sure, err on the side of dressiness.

Bring whatever method of taking notes you prefer. I take a miniature tape recorder, but I always ask permission to use it. I also have a notebook and two pens in case one runs out of ink. (Asking to borrow a writing implement looks unprofessional.) Lastly, I bring my card. If you don't have one, I really recommend getting some printed. Many computer programs will also let you print your own. Overall, cards are quite inexpensive, and handing one out adds a businesslike touch. If you don't have a card, write your name, address, and phone number on two or three sticky-notes and bring them instead.

You'll also want to write out a list of questions in advance. You don't want to waste your contact's time while you hem and haw over what else you want to ask. Besides, pre-writing the questions is a more professional approach, and you are a professional.

What do you offer to pay a contact? As a rule, nothing. Instead, you tell them that you'll put their name and title on the "Acknowledgements" page and send them an autographed copy of the book when it comes out. For a short story, you send an autographed copy of the magazine. And always, always, *always* send a thank-you note after the interview: "Dear Ms. Smith, I just wanted to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me. Your help was invaluable and will make the book [story] far more accurate than I could on my own. If you think of any other information to add, please don't hesitate to contact me."

By the way, if you interview your contact over dinner or drinks, you are expected to pick up the tab, even if the contact was the one who suggested the idea. It's a tax deduction, so save the receipt!

One last thing. If you deal with a government agency, be ready for red tape, and be persistent. Most government agencies have a specific person who deals with writers and reporters, and that may be the only person you're allowed to talk to.

When I first contacted the friend-of-a-friend FBI agent, for example, he told me I had to talk to the Special Agent who dealt with the press. This Special Agent referred me to the main press office in the Washington, D.C. headquarters. I contacted the office there and was told to fax them a copy of the questions I wanted to ask and that someone there would call me back to answer the ones whose answers weren't classified. I did this and got quite a lot of information over the phone. But I still wanted to see inside the Detroit Field Office. I made several phone calls to the McNamara Federal Building, but none of them were returned. I finally drove down there, zippered folder in hand, to see if showing up in person would net me a better response.

It did, though only a little better. I briefly met with a Special Agent, who told me I would have to clear a visit with Washington, D.C. first. So back home I went for another round of faxing and telephoning. As of this writing, I'm still working on getting that interview. Frustrating? Definitely.

But writing is an exercise in persistence.

❄

An Interview With Joan D. Vinge

by Charlene Brusso

This interview was done right after Chicon 2000, this year's Worldcon in Chicago over Labor Day weekend.

MZBFM: I was reading your website and it reminded me of something I'd forgotten. In college you majored in anthropology, but at first you intended to be an art major. What made you switch from art to anthro?

Vinge: Art teachers.

As simple as that?

As simple as that. Ever since I was eight or so I had this compulsion to draw and paint and do things like that — about the same time horses hit me, so I mainly wanted to draw and paint horses — but I had a really excellent art teacher in middle school and high school. He was just terrific. Art was the only class where I felt free in the whole oppressive day, so I really wanted to be an art major — even though my mother would say, "But you *must* take shorthand and typing, just to have something to fall back on."

Oh yes. Every female had to know these basic skills, as if there wasn't anything else to do with your life.

Well, I'm glad I learned how to type, at least. That was useful. I wound up going to this college up in L.A. that was a combination of commercial art and business school because I thought, "What I'd really like to do is be a book illustrator," and with commercial art at least I could support myself.

That all sounds reasonable in theory.

Right, but then I got up there and found I couldn't stand the business classes. I'm just not the buttoned-down corporate type. So my parents said, "Fine, you might as well go to San Diego State then," because it was right across the canyon from us. In those days girls getting a higher education was not a real priority. They probably thought, "Well, she's not married so we have to do *something* with her."

Photo by Rachel E. Holmen

Did you start there as an art major?

Yes, but the art instructors there, they weren't really professors, they were just artists who couldn't make a living as artists, as far as I could tell. They were these arrogant *schmucks* (pardon my Yiddish), not much older than we were, and their attitude was basically, "My way or the highway."

I've met a few writing teachers like that. It definitely doesn't make you want to work very hard for them.

Oh, I've heard so many stories from people whose desire to do art was crushed by people like that; you know, just completely destroyed! These teachers took all the pleasure out of doing it — and also, if they didn't like your politics, then they'd give you a bad grade; remember, it was the 60s. It was so subjective, and on top of that, the classes were twice as long for the same number of credits as any other class. I was too young and naive to deal with them then. Now I'd just tell them to go stuff it!

So then I began wandering all through the college trying this major, trying that major — which is what a lot of people did in the 60s. I thought about English. I liked English, but I kept hearing people say, "Well, I can't do anything else so I guess I'll just be a teacher."

Good grief! That must explain all the bad teachers you hear horror stories about now.

Yeah. I thought, "Oh god, *these* people are going to be teaching?" I've heard what students say behind the backs of teachers like that; I've even been one of the students saying those things! So I didn't want to teach — though I've found in recent years that when I've taught writing I've really enjoyed it and I'd kind of like to do more of that

in the future.

So how did you settle on anthropology?

Well, Andre Norton's book **THE TIME TRADERS** had always made me fascinated with the prehistoric era in Europe and Britain, and I kept trying to find out more about it but I couldn't in my high school history classes. So I found a "Prehistory of Europe" class and I had a tremendously good professor who was just inspiring. She really gave tough tests, but you could do them if you rose to the occasion, and then you felt really proud of yourself. That's the only time I ever *wanted* to do a term paper; I wanted to do one on the Bell Beaker Folk [of prehistoric Europe]. So I wound up being an anthropology major. I thought I would probably go on and get an advanced degree and teach, like most people do in that area. There's not much you can do with a B.A. [in anthropology] except be a journeyman digger.

When did you start writing science fiction?

Well, I got through college with the anthropology degree and then I met Vernor [Vinge] at the end of my senior year. He was just finishing up grad school at U.C. San Diego at the same time I was finishing my B.A. Harry Harrison's wife introduced us because she was a real matchmaker: "Oh, I have just the young man for you! It's terrible, he's all *alone*, he *needs* you, Joan!"

So one thing led to another and we wound up getting married. Vernor was the one who encouraged me to start writing seriously. Like a lot of science fiction fans, I used to write stories — horror stories, and when I was little, cowboy stories, and some science fiction and fantasy...

What did you want to write about when you first started?

I had this mental bent of taking old myths and stories and trying to put them into modern dress. I'd get ideas for stories from my anthropology, where the mythology and magic was really just old-time religion — the *real* old-time religion.

That works out well. The religion gives you the magical aspects so you could call it fantasy, but the world is also well-grounded in history so you can also say it's alternate history or sf.

Exactly. All science fiction is fantasy if you get right down to it. And there are all these archetypal myths. Jung talks about this and that archetype, you know, and I don't agree with everything he says, but I do think there are certain things that are meaningful to all human beings, no matter what their culture. It's something to do with the way our brains work, I think. Something to do with how we all seek answers for the uncertainties of life.

Anyway, I got really interested in that, and also in some of the symbolic elements of the old Mother Goddess religion. Archaeologists have been finding some interesting sites in Eastern Europe and there's been some really interesting work on that. Not everyone agrees — you know how it goes. Somebody has a new idea and somebody else says, "No, no! Utter rubbish!"

Not that people were perfect in ancient times, or that women had their feet on men's necks or anything like that, but rather that there was a much more egalitarian approach to life. You know, women had their things and men had theirs, but they were equally worthy because they all contributed to people surviving.

So all of this really is a major subtext in your stories, whether people notice it or not.

Yes — like in **THE SNOW QUEEN**. Some people see it very much as a fantasy because they pick up on the symbolism in some of the historical elements, and then skip over all the parts about black holes. But I want people to read my stories at whatever level of interpretation is meaningful to them, because that's how people will always read stories. Some people will miss the symbolism entirely and just see a nice long adventure/romance. Okay, if that's all they see, it's fine, but there's more there if they're interested enough to dig for it.

It's never really important to define the story as either science fiction or fantasy, is it?

Well, I've always loved reading fantasy as well as science fiction. On a subconscious level I get a lot of stuff out of mythology and things like Joseph Campbell, and Robert Graves' **THE WHITE GODDESS**. I was really fascinated by Joy Chant's **RED MOON AND BLACK MOUNTAIN**, because it gave the fantasy this sort of anthropological realism. It seems like that was the first time where I saw a fictional society come out so gritty and so real, the way it really might have been to live in another time.

Are there any images from your myth-reading that got a particularly strong hold on your imagination?

Jung's image of the magic pool of inspiration really sent a chill down my spine. It was exactly how I had

pictured it — and still do — when I'm looking for the right image, or what people are going to say next, or what's going to happen next in a story. And when I'm sitting and waiting, my interpretation is that's where the idea from the non-verbal right brain passes across to the verbal left brain. I can just see this dark pool and the thing just rising to the surface, *whoosh*, up into the end of your sentence — like the Magic Eight-Ball, you know?

When you were first published, you called yourself the "token female hard science fiction writer" at Analog. *But I doubt that anyone who's read your work would ever describe your science fiction as "hard sf". It certainly seems like there's a lot more there than rivets.*

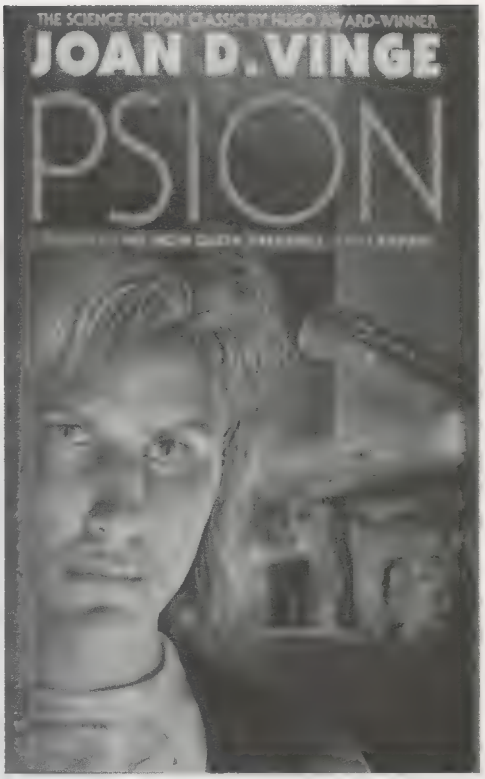
That name came because I was married to Vernor, who was very "nuts and bolts-y". He was a math professor; now he's a computer science professor, though retired. It really drove him insane when people made scientific mistakes, so when I'd write, he was sort of editing over my shoulder. He was a professor, teaching full-time and trying to get tenure, and he didn't have time to write science fiction himself, so he kind of sublimated his own writing effort by editing *me*. So there was a certain influence and pressure there to make it rigorous.

I'd have ideas for short stories — usually *long* short stories — but then I'd ask him, "Can I do this?" and he'd say, "No, no, but you could do this," or "*That's* ridiculous, but you could do this." So I would try to make it within the realms of scientific possibility, at least as it was known at the time. Then Ben Bova got fond of me at *Analog* and published a number of my stories, and serialized my first novel, **OUTCASTS OF HEAVEN** — or if you can find it anywhere, **THE OUTCAST CHRONICLES**, which is just about my "clankiest", the hardest science fiction I've ever written.

Where did the idea for ***OUTCASTS OF HEAVEN*** *come from?*

It was actually based on an idea Vernor had. I was just starting to write and he couldn't write because of his work, and I was casting around and saying, "What should I do now? I've finished this story and I don't have another idea immediately at hand." So he brings out this enormous pile of notes and goes *Whoomph!* and says, "Here you go, write this."

You mean like "Here you go, I couldn't do anything with this. Maybe you can?"



No, though actually before that I'd finished a story of his that he'd gotten stuck with halfway through, which got published in *Analog*. It's our only joint publication — I think it's in both our story collections — called "The Peddlar's Apprentice". But anyway, I took these notes and wrote the book, despite certain quibbles over this or that part — because he saw me, and still does, as a more emotional and sentimental writer than he — although in the years when he was teaching full-time and not writing very much, his right brain changed a lot and now he finds himself writing these extremely long, complex books full of these extremely complex characters. And he just won the Hugo! *Yea, Vernor!* [**A DEEPNESS IN THE SKY** won the 2000 Hugo for Best Novel.]

So your style must've rubbed off on him over time.

Yeah, actually I think it did, as well as his rubbing off on me. In fact, even though we're not married any more (Vinge's current husband is Jim Frenkel, an editor for Tor Books), Vernor and I still exchange manuscripts and give each other feedback on them when we can.

What was the first book you wrote that you felt was truly, totally yours without anyone looking over your shoulder and checking your facts?

That would be **THE SNOW QUEEN**. I had to get the courage up during the time I was writing the story to just say "No" if an editor, or Vernor, said, "I don't like this here. You should change this." If it didn't resonate with my own feelings about the story, I felt like now I *could* stand up to them and not cave in.

There's a scene in **OUTCASTS** where one of the characters has a mild stroke. Vernor wanted me to take it out because he thought it was too melodramatic and the book wouldn't sell. Then one day I just got the flash that it *needed* that scene and without it the thing was flat, so I put it back in. He said, "Take my name off the manuscript," because we had planned to write it jointly, so I said, "Well, okay..." I sent it out and *bang*, it sold just like that. I said, "Are you sure you don't want to put your name on it?" but he said "No." He felt it was important for us to establish ourselves as individual authors, which was good of him, and wise, I think. But I think **THE SNOW QUEEN** was really the first thing I wrote with that big anthro and

mythological-influenced world-building that I like.

I remember talking about it with friends when it first came out. It must have been a real challenge to work out such a vast, complex society.

Oh, it was terrifying. After my previous work, I wasn't expecting *that* to come out next. I thought I was going to write a *normal* length story. I really wanted to write about a lot of woman characters at that point because we were right at the beginning of that breakthrough period when women were starting to write a lot of good science fiction and I really wanted to help break the imbalance of female versus male characters. That was one reason I wanted to work with the Snow Queen myth. It's basically just an old folktale, but it's rife with mythological symbolism.

Your first published short story, "Tin Soldier", was also based in part on a Hans Christian Andersen story. Was he a special source for you in any way?

Well, he didn't actually make up most of the stories he's known for; he just wrote them down. You can see the big difference between the myth-based ones and his own work because they're totally unlike, for example, "The Little Match Girl" — for which I will *hate* him forever. It was obviously the influence of his Christian education, and it made him mess up a lot of stories. Like "The Little Mermaid": at least Disney gave it a happy ending! But "The Little Match Girl" is just cruel.

Can you tell us a little about ***LADYSMITH****, the book you're working on right now? From what I've seen on your website, it's a bit different from your previous books. I bet it will surprise a few people.*

It's so different for me, it makes me nervous. I started out wanting to write a book about the Bell Beaker Folk of prehistoric Europe, but it's actually an historical novel.

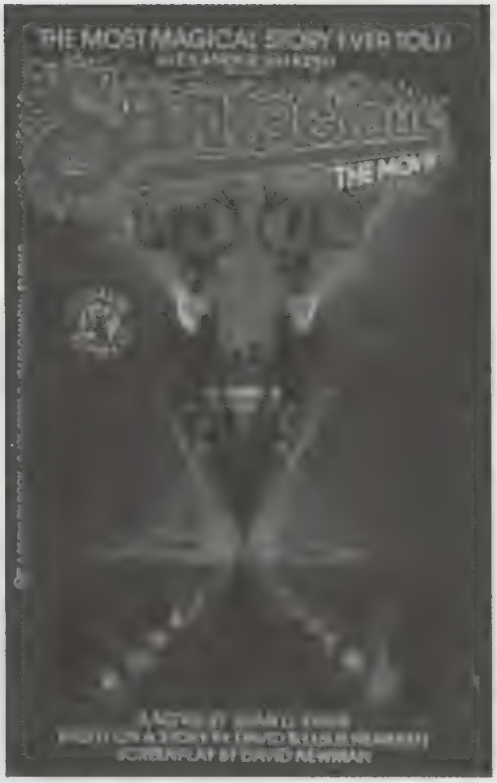
Photo by Rachel E. Holmen

Who were the Bell Beaker Folk? Where does the name come from?

They made these distinctive clay vessels, beaker-shaped. The archaeologists figure they probably drank beer out of them, and they find them in graves as if they were part of ceremonial burials.

Where did they live?

All over the place, actually. Down in Spain, up in the Netherlands, over in England — in Eastern Europe, too. They may have come from Eastern Europe, although no one can decide whether they came from there or from the Iberian Peninsula. But maybe they got there from somewhere else, maybe they sailed to Iberia. It's quite possible because apparently people had boats 'way earlier than anyone thought before. People were certainly sailing around by then [around 3000 B.C.].



I got fascinated by the guy they thawed out of the glacier in the Alps — "The Man In The Ice" — so I decided to set my story then.

You mentioned earlier that you'd been interested in the Bell Beaker Folk from your first days as an anthropology student. Was the discovery of that body in the ice the catalyst behind your decision to start ***LADYSMITH****?*

Yes, though actually he was a little too early for the Beaker Folk, so I've made him a sort of "proto" Beaker fellow: some guy who was out exploring, looking for copper and things like that.

Like **THE SNOW QUEEN** and **THE SUMMER QUEEN**, this is going to be a big, sprawling book with various people's storylines running through it. I'm hoping it will appeal to fantasy readers as well as science fiction readers because these people really believed in magic. There will be plenty of magical things happening, along with herbal healing and things like that.

One of my main characters is a woman who's a priestess of the old Goddess religion in a small enclave that's been left undisturbed while the patriarchal sorts have moved in and set up their more rigid societies. And then there are all the people moving into Europe from the steppes .... It's fascinating stuff and I could read about it forever — which is part of the problem; I've bought more books! But there's a lot more to know about that time now than when I was in college — unfortunately for me, because at first I thought I'd get to make up a lot more!

It sounds a little like being a student and writing a term paper all over again. The level of detail must be incredible.

Right. Things like, how the heck do you make a yurt out of felt anyway? How do you make *felt*? And then how do you make enough of it to sew together into a tent if what you do with it is, you squash down the wool and put it

between reed pads and put it under your saddle blanket and ride around on it all day to squash it down flat?

How's the book coming along? Can you estimate when it might be out?

Well, it's been taking a long time to get all the research done. I think I'm going to get started on it now, if I can just get through the humongous pile of email that came while I was at Worldcon — but that never ends. Actually, I stopped writing **LADYSMITH** for a while and wrote **TANGLED UP IN BLUE** instead. I really liked *L.A. Confidential* and got inspired, and I was just stuck in the other book. But I've only now just realized how different **TANGLED UP IN BLUE** really is. I was specifically trying to draw the people who like the "Cat" books into the "Snow Queen" universe, because my readers seem to be split between "Cat" fans and "Snow Queen" fans. I've got a feeling the pretty covers on **THE SNOW QUEEN** and **THE SUMMER QUEEN**, beautiful as they are, may have put off a lot of the people who liked Cat.

*It sounds like you tried to merge the styles of the two different series a bit — so **TANGLED UP IN BLUE** is sort of* noir *__SNOW QUEEN__?*

Exactly. With the "Cat" books, everyone who reads one wants to read the rest — although Warner has now made them impossible to obtain. Warner recently dumped me. I think they're getting rid of most of their science fiction line. They're amazingly effective at not selling books. When **THE SUMMER QUEEN** came out, I remember sitting down with someone in Warner publicity who explained to me how they couldn't afford to advertise my book because most of the budget was set aside to push **SCARLETT** .... So I've been looking for a new home.

They certainly have interesting ideas about balancing priorities.

Yes. Anyway, about the time I was writing **TANGLED UP IN BLUE**, I found out that my very best friend since I was eight had cancer, and I didn't know how much longer I'd have her in my life. It was only after the book came out that I realized what I was really doing in that book was trying to deal with my grief. On one level, it's just a shoot'em up cop novel. But on another level, the main character loses his beloved brother and has to deal with going on with his life. He's meeting all these other people whose lives are empty, and they get together as if trying to create this new family ... There's also a certain amount of catharsis, in that the heroes get to take big guns and either kill their vile opponents or put them in jail — which you cannot do with cancer. That's one of the good, cathartic things about writing — that you can get revenge on people or things which are otherwise beyond your control.

Which leads directly into my last question: I remember at a con, maybe ten years ago, I saw you in a panel called "Torturing Characters For Fun and Profit". Reviews of your books almost always comment on the emotional extremes your characters experience.

Oh, yes. My own life has been extremely difficult the last, I don't know how many, years. A lot of that writing was catharsis, and a lot of it was my own learning process, and a lot of the grief and pain was mine. Not that people were shooting at me with guns, but it's clearly a metaphor for pain, a lot of it emotional pain. It's something I had to deal with and that was how I was dealing with it.

But I get the most amazing letters from people ... Particularly readers of **CATSPAW**, for example. People will say, "God, that book saved my life. If it wasn't for Cat, I would've killed myself. Now I have the faith to believe in declaring who I am."

Why do you think people identify so closely with Cat?

I'm not sure. Somebody asked me once where he came from and I blurted out, "He's the personification of my social conscience." He is the victim's eye view of all the wrong in the world.

I was hoping in a way that readers would see things through his point of view and think about their own points of view. That's really what I want to do with my stories. People need to communicate with each other and they need to stop seeing each other superficially. They need to really *talk* to each other and stop being afraid of each other. That's what my books are about on one level. And on another, it's my own personal angst, cleverly disguised as science fiction. It's a mix not only of what's going on in the world as the writer writes, but also what's going on inside the writer as well.

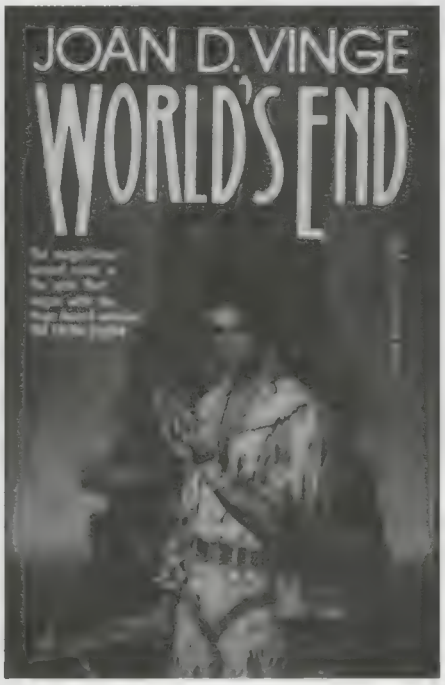
Thanks for talking with us, and good luck with the new book! ❄

Works by Joan D. Vinge

Novels:

THE OUTCASTS OF HEAVEN'S BELT(1978)
THE HEAVEN CHRONICLES(1991) —
contains novella "Legacy" and
THE OUTCASTS OF HEAVEN'S BELT
The "Snow Queen" series:
THE SNOW QUEEN(1980,
WORLD'S END(1984),
THE SUMMER QUEEN(1991),
TANGLED UP IN BLUE(2000)
The "Cat" series:
PSION(1982),
CATSPAW(1988),
DREAMFALL(1996)

Photo by Rachel E. Holmen



Collections:

FIRESHIP(1978)
EYES OF AMBER AND OTHER STORIES(1979)

Also various novelizations, including **LADYHAWKE**, **TARZAN, KING OF THE APES**, **WILLOW**, and **LOST IN SPACE**.

Hugo Awards for Best Novel: The Snow Queen (1980), and Best Novellette: "Eyes of Amber" (1977)

website: www.sff.net/people/jdvinge/x.htm

SPECIAL SALE ON

Marion Zimmer Bradley's *FANTASY Magazine* Back Issues!

All back issues are $4.00 until 11/30/00!

___#14 **(Fall 1991)** *Black Ribbon* - Dawn Albright. *The Tengu's Scroll* - Dana Kramer-Rolls. Cover art by Gail Butler. Interview with Teresa Edgerton.

___#16 **(Spring-Summer 1992)** *Never Look at a Gift Sword in the Horse's Mouth* - Jennifer Roberson. Cover by Alan Gutierrez. Interview with Lois McMaster Bujold.

___#21 **(Fall 1993)** – *First Love, Last Love* - Tanya Huff. *Mages of Carthia* - Cynthia McQuillin. Cover by Richard Powers. Interview with Elizabeth Ann Scarborough.

___#23 **(Spring 1994)** – *Killer Byte* - Mercedes Lackey. Cover by Vincent Di Fate. Interview with Peter S. Beagle.

___#24 **(Summer 1994)** *Ice Princess* - Elisabeth Waters. *The First Maxim* - Steven Piziks. Cover by David Cherry. Katherine Kurtz interview.

___#25 **(Fall 1994)** *The Masterpainter* - Diana L. Paxson. *On the Holy Mountain* - Darrell Schweitzer. Cover by Jill Bauman. Interview with Ray Nelson.

___#26 **(Winter 1994)** – *Dinner Music* - Jo Clayton. *Fool's Fire* - Marion Zimmer Bradley. Cover by Nick Jainschigg. Interview with Jennifer Roberson.

___#27 **(Spring 1995)** - *Pot of Dreams* - C.J. Cherryh & Jane S. Fancher. *A Little Night Music* - Dorothy J. Heydt. Cover by David Cherry. Interview with Gahan Wilson.

___#28 **(Summer 1995)** *The Harder They Fall* - Tanya Huff. *The Long Divorce of Steel* - eluki bes shahar. Cover by Bob Eggleton. Interview with Diana Paxson and Adrienne Martine-Barnes.

___#29 **(Fall 1995)** *Bloodsong* - Jo Clayton. *Humphrey's Dilemma* - Cynthia McQuillin. Cover by Nicholas Jainschigg. Interview with Tanya Huff.

___#30 **(Winter 1996)** *A Prince Among Frogs* - Elisabeth Waters. *The Counterfeit Maiden* - Richard Purtill. Cover by Jonathan Hunt. Interview with Lisa Goldstein.

___#31 **(Spring 1996)** *The Weeping Loon* - RobinWayne Bailey. *Dragon-in-Law* - Connie Hirsch. *Neko's Dance* - Carol Leever. Cover by James Balkovek. Interview with Poul Anderson.

___#32 **(Summer 1996)** *Fox Maid's Travail* - Jo Clayton. *The Little Pink Worm* - Dorothy Heydt. *Eighty Shen* - Carrie Martin. Cover by Nicholas Jainschigg. Interview with Charles de Lint.

___#33 **(Fall 1996)** *A Sphinx in the Mind* - Karen Anderson. *United Powers* - Kathleen Massie-Ferch. *A Painterly Effect* - Ardath Mayhar. Cover by Margaret Organ-Kean. Interview - Esther Friesner.

___#34 **(Winter 1997)** *Thin Man* - Steven Piziks. *The Bone's Captive Bride* - Jo Clayton. *The Test* - Max Wright. *Thimbleful of Magic* - Carrie Martin. Cover by George Barr. Interview - Ellen Kushner.

___#35 **(Spring 1997)** *Maiden Phoenix* - India Edghill. *The Rose, the Rich Man, and Mother Berchte* - Steven Piziks. Cover Vincent Di Fate. Interview with Susan Shwartz.

___#36 **(Summer 1997)** *The Knife that Makes Men* - Mary Aldridge. *Kvetchula* - Darrell Schweitzer. Cover by Alicia Austin and George Barr. Interview with Vincent Di Fate.

___#37 **(Fall 1997)** *Grey* - Mercedes Lackey. *Winterkill* - Colin Dunn. *Exterminator* - Cynthia Mcquillin. Cover by Nicholas Jainschigg. Interview with Octavia E. Butler.

___#38 **(Winter 1998)** *Bisclavret* - India Edghill. *A Voice in the Night* - Katherine Blake. Cover by Margaret Davis. Interview with Lawrence Watt-Evans.

___#39 **(Spring 1998)** *Escape Artists* - Susan Shwartz. *The Valley of Stones* - Patricia Duffy Novak. *The House in the Hollow* - Helen Kenyon. Cover by David Cherry. Interview with Connie Willis.

___#40 **(Summer 1998)** *Ivy* - Esther Friesner. *Running to Camelot* - Darrell Schweitzer. *The Piper's Tale* - Laura Underwood. Cover by Mark Harrison. Interview with Robert Holdstock.

___#41 **(Fall 1998)** *Tiger, Tiger* - Carol Leever. *Gryphon Rider* - Cherith Baldry. *Three Nights Penance 'til Lakkas Day* - Janna Silverstein. Cover by Carl Lundgren. Interview with Nancy Springer.

___#42 **(Winter 1999)** *Hellhound* - Deborah Wheeler. *A Winter's Tale* - Laura Underwood. *Absinthe Eyes* - Charlene Brusso. Cover by Margaret Organ-Kean. Interview with eluki bes shahar.

___#43 **(Spring 1999)** *Tasks* - Susan Dexter. *The Seeds of Memory* - Barbara Davies. *It's Not the Pig* - Theresa Feehan. Cover by Victoria & Julius Lisi. Interview with Terry Bisson.

___#44 **(Summer 1999)** *Wild Swan* - India Edghill. *The Magic of the Lost God* - Mary Catelli. Cover by Nicholas Jainschigg. Interview with Josepha Sherman.

__#45 **(Fall 1999)** *White Violets* - Andre Norton. *The Firebird's Feather* ... by Richard Purtill. Cover by George Barr. Interview with Guy Gavriel Kay.

__#46 **(Winter 2000)** *Butternut Ale* - Susan Dexter. *Cup of Songs* by Laura J. Underwood. Cover by Omar Rayyan. Marion Zimmer Bradley Memorial Issue.

__#47 **(Spring 2000)** *Untune the Sky* - Cherith Baldry. *A Dear Gazelle* by Elizabeth Wein. Cover by Lori Deitrick. Interview with Michaela Roessner.

__#48 **(Summer 2000)** *The Invisible Knight's Squire* by Darrell Schweitzer, *Tante Hélène* by Patricia Russo. Cover by Michael Kucharski Interview with Pamela Dean.

__#49 **(Autumn 2000)** *Rowan, Oak, and Iron* Susan Dexter. *Piper at the Gate* by Rosemary Edghill. Cover by Mark Ferrari. Interview with Joan D. Vinge.

Sold Out: #1 through 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22. **Get these back issues while they last!** Enclose $4.00 for each back issue. Include $2.50 book rate postage **per order** or $1.65 first class postage **per issue** (which is much faster).

Name:_____

Address:_____

City, State, Zip:_____

Please enclose check or money order in U.S. currency and make payable to Marion Zimmer Bradley Living Trust.

Visa/MC_____Exp._____Signature_____

Send to: Marion Zimmer Bradley Ltd., P.O. Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701

Hardcastle's Dragon

by Martin Owton

Squire Hardcastle tethered his horse to the post beside the horse trough at the corner of the marketplace and paused to brush the dust off his coat.

"Mind him for us, lad." He tossed a farthing to a cross-eyed boy who sat nearby and set off up a side street of handsome stone houses. He stopped at a doorway and peered suspiciously at the small brass plate on the wall; it read *Office of the College of Wizards.* He tugged on the bellpull beside the plate and waited. Presently the door opened and an elderly woman conducted him inside.

The interior smelt pleasantly of lavender and the beeswax polish that had evidently been lavished on the wall-paneling and floorboards of the corridor. Squire Hardcastle could feel the maid's disapproval boring into the back of his head as his hobnailed boots scuffed across the floor. The corridor ended at a door which was equally well polished. He knocked gently on it just below the plate that read J. *Hoskins, Clerk to the Wizards.*

"Enter," came a voice from beyond the door. Squire Hardcastle did as he was bidden.

J. Hoskins sat behind a large wooden desk with an ornate inkstand, and a second plate reminding the world that he was Clerk to the Wizards, placed between him and his visitor. He was a small man with a large nose whose hair had retreated to leave grey tufts at the side of his head as if a dormouse perched over either ear.

"How may I help you?"

"I've got a dragon," said Hardcastle, looking around for somewhere to sit down; there was nowhere, save the rug.

"You mean it belongs to you?" said Hoskins.

"No," said the Squire, his broad vowels rolling round the room. "I mean it's on my land, eating my sheep, and summat needs to be done now." Hardcastle stopped just short of banging a meaty fist on the desk.

"And what do you want done about it?" asked Hoskins mildly, making a bridge of his long pale fingers.

"I want rid of it, soon as you can. It's costing me a fortune."

"Ah right." Hoskins pulled open a drawer of his desk and extracted a sheaf of papers. "You'll need to fill these in then."

"What's this lot?"

"There's a registration form and there's the proposal form. You'll need three copies of the proposal plus any supporting documentation."

"Proposal?" Hardcastle's brow furrowed. "What proposal?"

"The proposal of action against this dragon of yours. We can't just send in a wizard without a full plan of action including timelines and contingencies." Hoskins looked pityingly at the Squire, his eyes like two boiled gooseberries. "Wizards are incredibly busy people. There are far too many requests for assistance for all to be fulfilled, so they have to be considered by the committee and, if approved, appropriate resources will be allocated."

"How long does that take?" The furrows deepened.

"Oh, not long. It's quite efficient," said Hoskins with a smile. "When you submit your proposal it will go to the appropriate subcommittee, and they'll pass it to the full committee, if they approve it. The subcommittees sit every four weeks and the full committee every six weeks."

"Subcommittee?" Squire Hardcastle said quietly.

"Yes. Each subcommittee has it own area. In your case your proposal will go to the fabulous beasts committee. You don't want a committee of wizards who specialize in finding wills or lifting curses considering a dragon, do you? Everyone on the committee will have experience in dealing with mythic monsters, such as your dragon, and they'll recommend to the full committee what should be done. The full committee usually goes along with their recommendation unless there are political aspects."

Artwork by Barb Armata

"Political aspects?" The squire pronounced each syllable separately.

"Going against the interest of the King or one of the senior wizards. A curse on a royal traitor perhaps. Nothing that should affect your dragon."

"T'aint my dragon," said Hardcastle forcefully and the buttons on his leather waistcoat creaked under the strain. "How long afore I can get summat done about it?"

"We should be able to do something within three months of receiving your proposal." Hoskins gathered up the sheaf of papers and stacked them neatly with a few taps of his pale fingers.

"Hang about," said the Squire. "Do I have to write proposal meself?" A bead of sweat rolled down his ruddy cheek.

"Yes. In triplicate." Hoskins pushed the sheaf of papers at the Squire.

"I've never written anything like that in my life. Where do I start?" Hardcastle drew out a none-too-clean handkerchief and mopped his brow.

"Many clients do find it advantageous to hire someone as a consultant for the preparation of a proposal. I can supply you with a list of suitably qualified wizards."

"So why can't he just deal with the dragon while he's working fer me?"

"No magical action can be undertaken without the express approval of the committee," Hoskins said sternly, the gooseberries frozen. "He's only acting as a consultant. No legitimate wizard would work any other way."

"And how much will this 'ere consultant charge?" said Hardcastle, frowning so deeply that his bushy eyebrows met in the middle.

"It depends on the seniority of the wizard. A recently qualified junior wizard would be no more than a couple of crowns a day. But, of course, you would want someone with direct experience of dragons and that will certainly push you up to, say, eight or ten crowns."

"How many days' work?" Hardcastle twisted his handkerchief fiercely.

"It's hard to tell. Maybe a week to review the literature and write an action plan. Could be more if he decides he needs a site visit. You'd meet his travel expenses in that case, naturally." The gooseberries seemed to glow with an inner light.

"Aye, naturally," said the Squire through clenched teeth.

"And then there would be the expenses of the action team if the plan was approved. The wizards are paid by the College, of course, but if they need other specialists such as, say, archers, then you'd have to hire them yourself."

"Aye, and they'd have traveling expenses and such that I'd have to pay."

"Yes, they might well," said Hoskins enthusiastically. "I see you're getting the picture."

"Eee, by heck," said the Squire heavily. "How do folk afford such expense?"

"There are a number of insurance policies that will cover you for all thaumaturgical expenses. In fact the College offers its own policy for as little as ten crowns a year. I have the details here if you're interested." Squire Hardcastle's weathered features brightened and Hoskins reached into a drawer. "Of course it would not cover

Artwork by Barb Armata

your existing problem," he added.

Hardcastle's brightness faded. "Aye, you don't say," he said as he took the leaflet. "Is there any way I can get summat done quicker?"

"Well, you can appeal directly to the Archmage, but I don't think that would be appropriate in this case."

"But it's a dragon and a big one at that. It's dangerous."

"Are large numbers of people in imminent peril? Has anyone died yet?" Hoskins spread his hands. "It's not in the same class as a outbreak of spotted fever or an invasion of goblins and, as the Archmage will see it, the problem is contained. The dragon is, in all probability, not a threat until it runs out of sheep, so there is time for the proper procedures to be followed."

"The proper procedures. Aye, I see," said Hardcastle, folding his arms across his broad chest. "Is there somebody else who can help me? How about a valiant knight?"

"Is there a girl involved?" asked Hoskins with genuine interest. "You could try them, but in my experience, they are rarely interested unless there's a fair damsel to be rescued."

"No," said Hardcastle. "My lass is married with three kiddies and runs to plumpness, and I doubt t'goosegirl would be sufficient."

"No. Probably not. I'm sure the College can come up with a plan to assist you if you put in a proposal."

"Aye, no doubt they can," said the squire unenthusiastically.

"There is one other thing I should mention," said Hoskins. "There's an application fee of twenty crowns."

"You don't say."

"It's to deter frivolous applicants."

"Do I sound as if I'm being frivolous?" The waistcoat buttons creaked in alarm again.

"No. But we do get all sorts of people putting in proposals claiming they're the victim of some unauthorized sorcery or they've been cursed by their neighbors." Hoskins crossed his arms in front of him. "We do our best to discourage that sort of thing. It's very time-consuming and the wizards have plenty of important matters that need their attention."

"Committees and actions plans and t'like."

"Yes. I'm glad you understand."

"Aye. Thank you for your time, Master Hoskins, I think I understand t'process now." Hardcastle turned towards the door, the sheaf of papers tucked under his arm.

"A pleasure and do let me know if there's anything else I can assist you with." Hoskins smiled broadly. "We're here to help."

Squire Hardcastle smiled politely in reply, but said nothing as he opened the door.

A moment later he was walking down the street.

Blasted waste of time. It'd be a sight cheaper to just keep feeding t'dragon and charge folk sixpence to see it, he thought bitterly as he reached his horse. He nodded to the cross-eyed boy, and paused a moment caught by the thought. *And why not? How many folk have ever seen a dragon?* He reached out to drop the papers into the horse trough, then mounted up and rode away.

❄

MARTIN OWTON is English. A graduate of Cambridge University, he holds a PhD in chemistry and works in research for a major pharmaceutical company. He is married and lives near Ascot, west of London. He has been writing seriously for five years, and his short stories have appeared in many small press magazines in the UK and US. He received an Honourable Mention in THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY AND HORROR OF 1996 for one of his first published stories. As a teenager he devoured the works of Asimov and Heinlein as well as the world of Tolkien. Consequently his writing covers a broad range of genres from Science Fiction through Horror to classic Heroic Fantasy. This is his first major magazine sale. He is currently looking for a publisher for his first novel, an heroic fantasy tale. He is a member of the T-Party writers' group in London (http://www.fnapf.demon.co.uk/t-party).

BARB ARMATA has lurked on the edges of the SF-Fantasy art world for many years. She has illustrated for many publications, most frequently for these pages. Her paintings have been displayed at both World Science Fiction and World Fantasy Art Shows, and can be found on numerous Collectable Card Game cards. Primarily a self-taught artist, Barb has done time working in print, ad and graphics shops. She has a wide range of Fortean interests and hopes to return to the art show circuit soon.

MZB FM

Check out the *Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY Magazine* website!
http:/www.mzbfm.com

- **Downloadable Fiction, Art, and Manuscript Preparation Guide lines**
- **Marion Zimmer Bradley Biography and Bibliography**
- **Interviews with Ellen Kushner and Octavia Butler**
- **Subscription info**
- **Bookstore info**
- **"Why Did My Story Get Rejected?" and other helpful articles and advice for writers**
- **FAQ**

http://www.mzbfm.com

Moving?

Your subscription copy of *Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY Magazine* will not be forwarded by the U.S. Post Office. Please send us a change of address as soon as you know it.

Conqueror

by Jon Hansen

I had no name, nor did I need one. For untold centuries I had been ruler of all. My scales were strong as the rock, and my claws long and sharp. My wings swung wide to blot out the moon, and my breath burned hot as the sun's noontime fires. I dug my lair deep, underneath a hill. The grass grew long and covered it well, and there I dwelt.

In time I was discovered by humans. Small and weak they were compared to me, yet numerous, and fierce in their way. In those days I was not so picky about what I ate. When I dove upon one of their little tribes, they fought bravely, struggling and dying, trying to let their mates and young escape. Aye, they tried to overcome me! But each encounter ended the same: their bones piled upon the field and their flesh rumbling in my belly.

In time a new race of men rose up, the blue-painted Celts. They worshipped me, and paid me honor as I was due. Under the full moon their druids would make sacrifices to me, sacrifices of flesh and blood. In wicker cages they imprisoned others of their kind, captured in some petty squabbles of their own, and chanted paeans while my fiery breath roasted their offerings alive. In those days I feasted well.

Then the Romans came, with their legions and banners. They did me no honor, thinking me only a wild beast. They sent their legions to capture me, to bring me back to Rome for the honor of their Emperor, to be marveled at by the mobs and to die in the arena. The Romans were brave fools. None who attempted to capture me succeeded.

After the Romans departed I spent long years in lazy slumber. Men grew weak and fearful, staying far from my hill. I contented myself with hunting their sheep and cattle, fat from the long grass.

Then one day there came a man to my lair. In the fashion of the Romans he had covered himself in metal. But unlike the Romans, who wore bronze, he wore iron, the bones of the hills. He carried a heavy spear and a long sword, and reeked of oil and sweat. In a defiant voice he roared out a challenge to me to come out and face him. In the distance scattered peasants, wiser than he, watched in fear.

Old I was, but out I came, roaring with the fury of my youth. He trembled then, but like the fool Romans, he stood his ground. He hurled the spear at me, hoping to pierce my heart. But the spear shattered on my scales and a buffet from my wings struck him down. His armor was not so tough as mine, and opened easily to my claws. As his blood dried on the stones I pondered what could have driven this man to certain death.

To my surprise, in the years that followed other men came. Most carried weapons like the first, calling out challenges, asking me to meet them in combat. I always obliged. They fought fiercely, but uselessly.

Others, less honorable but wiser, tried in a variety of ways to slay me. Some slaughtered sheep before my hill, and covered the meat with powerful poisons. But my keen nose could smell the foulness mixed with the blood scent. Others crept into my lair at night while I slept, hoping to find a weak spot in my scales. But they too failed. They stank so of sweat and fear that even in my slumber I could not help but smell them and awake.

In time no more men came to challenge me. In their nearby towns I came to be regarded as a legend. They wrote songs in my honor and sang them in their strange voices. They fashioned images of me and danced with them through the streets, thinking to please me. I paid them no mind, having lost my taste for such foolishness. In time even these festivals disappeared. Undisturbed I slept away the centuries,

only arising every few years to feed.

Then one day as I arose with the morning mists to take wing, I spotted a young human watching me. This was a young female, wearing the strange coverings of their kind. I had little traffic with females, although once in a while some of the iron men used them as bait to lure me.

This one only sat and watched me, no doubt thinking herself safely distant. But my eyes were keener than the hawk's and I saw with ease all she did. As I regarded her, she raised up a small black box and pointed it at me. At first I thought this another clever weapon of their kind and prepared for the attack. But when nothing happened and she did not approach me, I relaxed. Then, as the sun arose over my hill and turned the grass the color of fire, I spread my wings and launched myself into the clouds.

I hunted well that day: a tasty cow, fattened on grain. It bellowed only once as I made the kill. I returned late, with the sun low in the sky, and entered my hill.

But as I settled to resume my sleep I could hear, outside my hill, a human's voice. Sleepy but curious, I emerged. Before me stood the young female from that morning, staring at me with wide eyes, stinking of fear and excitement.

"Here," she said in a trembling voice. "This is for you." She laid something on the earth and then, overcome, she fled. I let her go, and bent to regard her gift. Others had left me tribute before: gold, jewels, sometimes a baby.

But this gift was different, rather resembling a large leaf. My heart paused as I stared at it. Cunningly done on this curious leaf was an image of myself, like the reflection in a pool, but undisturbed by the rippling of the water. I stared at it.

For the first time I could see the colors of my scales, my wings flung back as I prepared to take flight in the morning sun. How noble, how regal I looked! Never before had I seen myself in such vivid detail! I drank it in, until the sun set and the stars began to twinkle in the night.

At last I had been defeated. Not by spear or sword, but by a girl's simple gift, unasked and freely given. I had been given something I never had before, and now I am forever conquered. ❄

A few things have changed since JON HANSEN's last appearance. He's moved deeper into the Midwest, having finished his MLS. But, as no librarian positions are currently available in the area, right now he's working as an adjunct professor at the University of Northern Iowa. He's also sold some more fiction and poetry, with work scheduled to appear in *Aboriginal Science Fiction*, *Dark Regions*, *Flesh & Blood*, and *Pulp Eternity*. Jon presently lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa with his wife Lisa and their three cats. He can be reached by email at jonhansen@cfu-cybernet.net. This is his second sale to *Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY Magazine*.

MARGARET DAVIS is an illustrator, calligrapher, singer, Celtic harper, flutist and recorderer. Her Celtic/Medieval band Broceliande has a new album available at www.flowinglass.com. She lives in Oakland, CA, with her musical husband Kristoph.

Spell Check

by Sean Eric Fagan

I finished clearing off the floor, and checked my supplies. Chalk, string, candles, goat and chicken blood, incense ... all there. Picking up a piece of white chalk, my compass, and a yardstick, I placed the first point of the pentagram due north, and started drawing.

Instead of closing it, I naturally left it an inch open. As I straightened up, a little blue imp appeared and said, "An unfinished pentagram will not hold as a barrier; correct?"

"Ignore," I said. It vanished.

Next, I drew a semicircle at one of the angles; again the imp appeared, and warned me, "Container circles should be drawn in red chalk for maximum effect; correct?" Startled, I looked and realized I hadn't changed chalk; I shrugged, and told it, "Correct."

"Done," it said, and vanished; the semicircle had turned red. I went and picked up a piece of red chalk for the remaining four.

I picked out the five best black candles I had, and five silver candle holders. I placed each one in a circle, going counter-clockwise; then I lit each one in reverse order, using a lamb-fat candle.

Next, I stood in the center of the pentagram, and drew the Eye of Atropos, surrounded by a triangle. When that was done, I stood over it, pricked my finger with a silver pin, chanted, "In this circle, wards be; in this circle, blind be," and squeezed three drops of blood onto the Eye.

Just before the third one struck, it stopped, and the imp appeared again. "Warning: blinding the Eye of Atropos without a finished pentagram may result in insufficient binding; correct?"

"Ignore," I said, and sighed. Once again, it vanished, and the drop continued.

Next, on the outside of the northmost corner, I drew the Symbol of Binding. As I finished it, the imp appeared, and warned me, "This symbol is unknown; perhaps you mean one of these?" Four symbols appeared; I looked at what I had drawn, and realized I'd used my own variant of the Symbol. "Learn," I told it.

"Done," the imp said, and vanished.

It didn't bother me at each of the remaining corners; by this time, the candles were nearly halfway done, which meant I was running out of time. But I was nearly done.

I picked up the baggies of goat and chicken blood, and stepped into the pentagram, sealing it off behind me. Dipping my finger into the chicken blood, I drew a circle just inside the boundaries of the pentagram. As I finished, I was not surprised to be asked, "The Circle of Attraction is not a true circle; for best results, a perfectly-round circle should be used; correct?"

"Ignore," I snapped.

Lastly, in the center of the pentagram and circle, I drew the Runes of Expulsion with the goat blood, and said, "Imp, I abjure thee! Imp, I banish thee! Imp, I cast thee out!"

On the second repetition, wind started blowing, and I had a hard time standing; on the third, the wind was almost a small tornado, and I was having a hard time not being pushed out of the circle, and the candles had all disappeared. By the time I finished it for the ninth and final time, I was exhausted, and sweating. "Begone!" I yelled.

There was a flash of light, the wind stopped, and the candlelight flickered back.

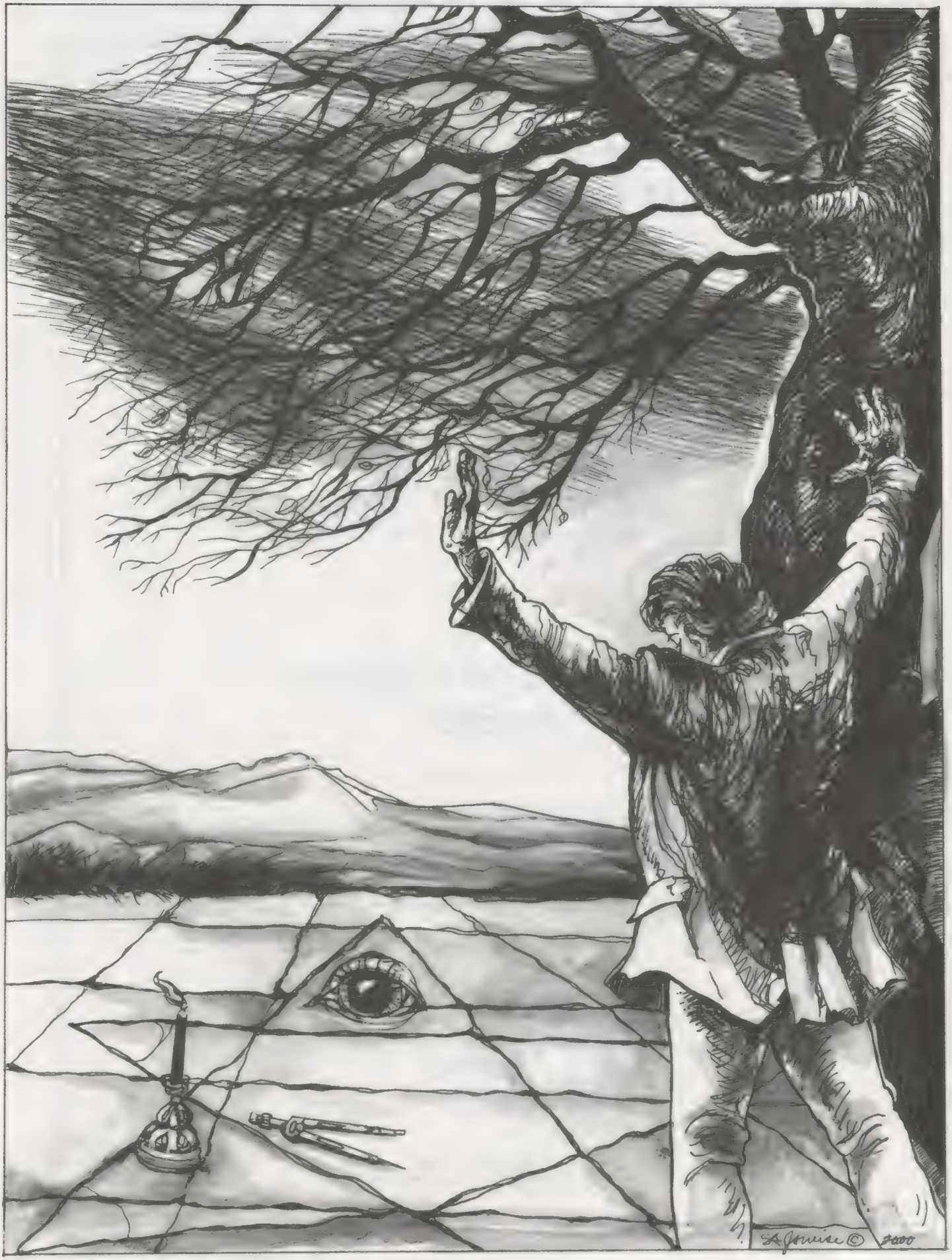
"Finally!" I cried, as I collapsed to my knees.

The imp appeared in front of me. "You have selected to disable the Yogsoft Automatic Spell Checker, version 1.0A. To continue, please perform the Ritual of Confirmation."

❄

Sean Eric Fagan was born in late 1967. He has had a life-long fascination with animals, and currently shares his San Jose house with four snakes and two lizards. He studied computers and programming in high school and college, eventually dropping out to take a job in Northern California. Since then, he has been involved with the "Open Source" movement since before it had that name, and is currently working as an anti-spam activist. He runs a Web server that hosts web pages for several authors at http://www.kithrup.com. He also lives with a psychotic cat who insists on being mentioned anytime he is.

Shirley Jowise has been a resident of California for many years, where she works as a painter and illustrator. Shirley studied fine arts and design under Franz Elwood at the Academie der Bildenden Kunst in Vienna, Austria. She is a graduate of the Worcester Art Museum School in Massachusetts and holds a BFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts.



Artwork by Shirley Jowise

What are **you** giving this holiday season?

The same old bookstore
gift certificates
you give every year?

Give
Alexandria Gift Certificates
instead.

Over 600 titles to choose from—most available nowhere else,
in formats compatible with, well, everything.
Elegant paper certificates delivered to your door
or to your recipient.

ALEXANDRIA
DIGITAL
LITERATURE

www.AlexLit.com

LETTERS

Missing the Magazine Already

Tamora Pierce

I would like to say how very sorry I am to see that the magazine is shutting down. I think it provided an invaluable source for new authors, both as a venue from which they could try their work in public, and as a source of advice and help. Have you plans for a new such magazine?

I am definitely planning to continue in the field of publishing, somewhere, somehow. Contact me at reh@well.com, or write to P.O. Box 2916, Oakland, CA 94618-0116, U.S.A. Margaret Davis will continue her singing, harping, and artistic careers. She and her husband Kristoph Klover have a website for their music production company, Flowinglass Music, at http://www.flowinglass.com — check it to see their future plans. Margaret's Celtic and Early Music ensemble Broceliande has just released its first self-titled CD, which is available on the Flowinglass Music website. — reh

Marsha Brown

I am, as I am sure are most of the MZBFM subscribers, extremely disappointed that the magazine is closing. Of course, I was also saddened to hear of Ms. Bradley's passing. I have been an avid fan of hers since 1979, and look forward to every new anything of hers. I will now have to be satisfied with rereading her work, and following the many excellent writers she has encouraged and introduced to me and many other readers.

Thanks to the staff for such a great magazine. I will truly miss it.

Jennifer Brown, Austin, TX

I'm sorry to see MZBFM cease publication, as I'm sure all the subscribers are. Between the magazine and the S&S books, I've enjoyed 'discovering' many new authors, and wonderful tales.

Michael G. Hyde, Westborough, MA

Cheers to all, I will really miss the magazine. You folks have been an unceasing inspiration to this writer-wanna-be.

Nykki, by email

I just wanted to thank all of you for the hard work that you do, for those of us that enjoy the worlds you take us to. I always wanted to submit a story but I didn't get my courage up in time. I was saddened by the news of Mrs. Bradley's death. You have all inspired me and given me hope.

I wish there was a way to keep the magazine going. I look forward to it each time, and spend the first day devouring all the stories. If there is anything that the fans could do to help, please let me know.

On behalf of all of the staff past and present, thank you for your kind words. What can fans do? Nykki, send money. <grin> Seriously, I might be starting up a new magazine if the trustee and I can't figure out a way for me to continue this one. You could be a charter subscriber! See above for contact information. — reh

W. S. Bachman, Lincoln, NE

It has come to my attention that Marion Zimmer Bradley has passed away. I would like you to convey to her next of kin my regrets. If I'm ever able to make a living writing, it will be because of Ms. Bradley's firm guidance.

Years ago I submitted a short story that I should have thrown into the trash. She sent me a very strongly-worded rejection letter that caused me to step back from my writing — I didn't write anything for over a month. I didn't even journalize.

It was the best thing that she could have done for me. It taught me to look at my writing with a critical eye — I even sent her stories I knew that she would reject just to see what I was doing wrong!

She was one of my favorite editors, and I will miss her.

Terrific Artwork

A.M. Horcher, by email

The cover artwork of the last few issues has truly been stunning. The lack of a label has freed you to do some gorgeous things. The blue and white knight of the summer issue almost leaps out of the page.

I forwarded your praise to Michael Kucharski, the cover artist for issue 48. Thank you! — reh

Possible Copyright Violation

Carrie H., by email

On another web site [e.g., not mzbfm.com], there is a book that is titled "Jenseits von Avalon" with Marion Zimmer Bradley's name and cover art that is very like her **FOREST HOUSE** book. The keeper of that website says this book is an honorary anthology for MZB by Diana Gabaldon. I disagreed, but had no proof.

If I am right, the web keeper wants to know so she can remove it.

*Thank you for your e-mail. I have checked the web site you mentioned. The cover art is not "very like" the Forest House cover; it **is** the Forest House cover. It was recycled for this anthology, which was compiled in Germany as part of a multi-book deal finalized before Mrs. Bradley's death.*

*An editor in Germany put together the anthology, using some stories from Jennifer Roberson's tribute anthology **RETURN TO AVALON** and some new stories.*

The anthology is legitimate and is properly referenced on her site. You can tell the web keeper she has nothing to worry about.

We do, however, appreciate your bringing it to our attention. Just because this use is proper doesn't mean that there are not people out there who are stealing MZB's work and/or trying to damage her reputation. — ew

Vegetables Delay Art

Dear Rachel,

I had intended to get the illos [for Hardcastle's Dragon] in the mail Friday but things have caused me to lose some inking time. Nothing major — my sister threw her back out — at the exact time that **allll** the garden vegetables and berries, etc., decided to ripen. So, not only did I have to take care of Mom — I had to do twice the veggie picking, cleaning, etc. Anyway — I will be mailing the illos on Monday morning.

— Barb Armata (now chasing raccoons and foxes out of the corn and hoping the skunk isn't with them)

Barb's artwork arrived just fine, skunkfree. — reh

The National Best-selling Series

Now in Paperback...

The conclusion to Lackey & Dixon's acclaimed *Owl* trilogy.

Two years after his parents disappearance, Darian has sought refuge and training from the mysterious Hawkbrothers. Now he has opened his heart to a beautiful young healer and found peace and acceptance in his life. That is, until he learns that his parents may still be alive—and trapped behind enemy borders...

0-88677-918-2/$6.99

Praise for the Owl Trilogy:

"*Owlsight* will bring new fans into the fold and please those who already love the land of Valdemar."
—Starlog

"Vintage Mercedes Lackey."
—Voya

"A pleasing coming-of-age adventure featuring an appealing set of characters."
—Romantic Times

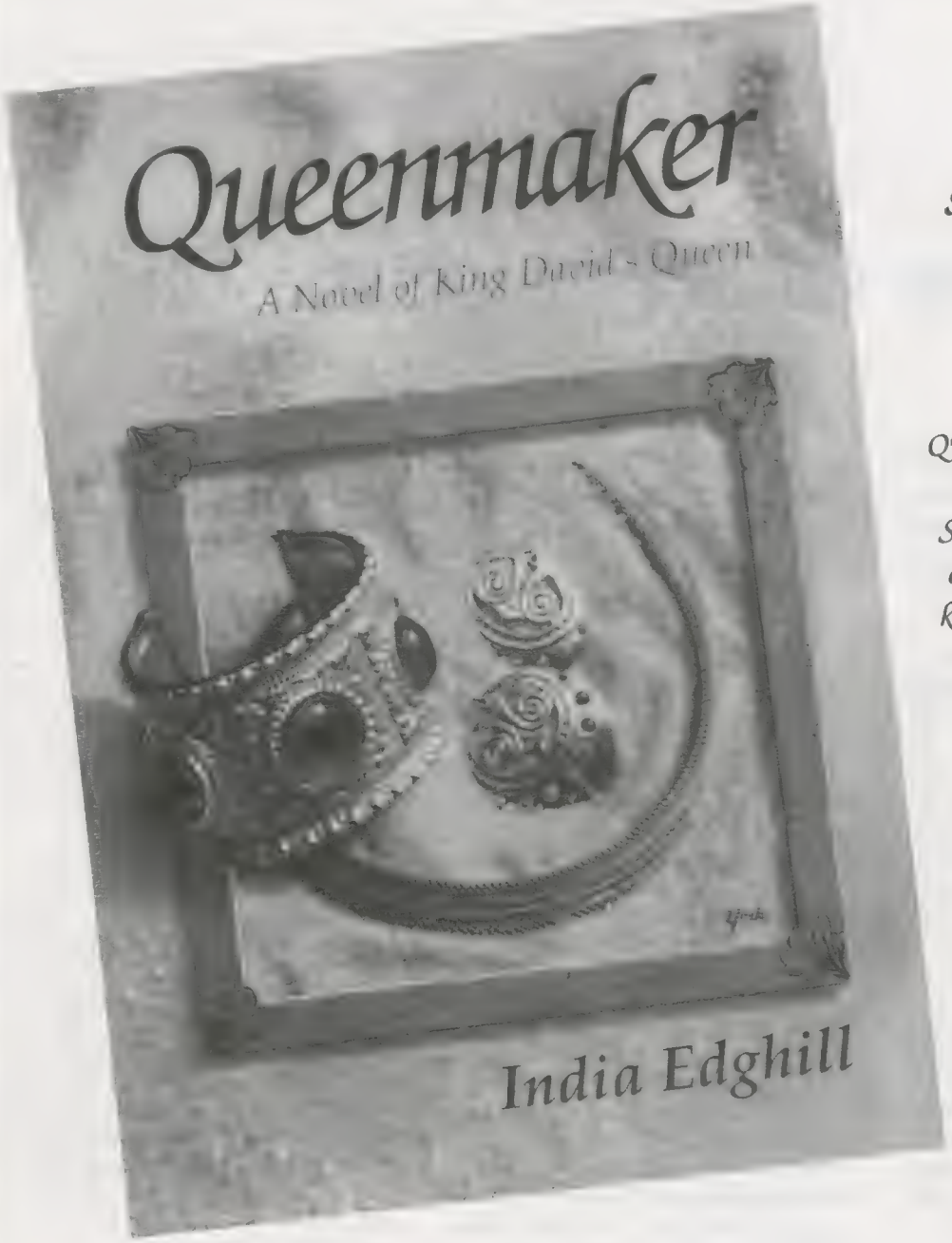
Don't miss the previous two volumes in the trilogy:

Owlflight
0-88677-804-2/$6.99

Owlsight
0-88677-803-4/$6.99

Available wherever books are sold.

Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com



A man's weapons are sword and spear; a woman's are her wits . . .

QUEENMAKER is the story of Michal, daughter of King Saul and wife of King David of Israel. The splendor of the king's court and the austerity of the prophets; honor and betrayal; love, hate, and the shadow of madness — all come to vivid life under Michal's perceptive eye. Unforgettable characters; public deeds and private thoughts; tales of valor and whispers in the shadows — QUEENMAKER gives us the court of the kings as only a woman could see it.

"Splendid." — Marion Zimmer Bradley
"A classic!" — Haley Elizabeth Garwood
"Powerfully moving." — Roberta Gellis
"Simply mesmerizing." — Nicole Jordan
"Lyrical, evocative, and elegantly told." — Susan Krinard
"An excellent book." — Andre Norton

Available from:
Amazon.com
Barnes & Noble on-line
Borders.com
Xlibris.com

ISBN 0-7388-0732-X (hc) $25.00
0-7388-0733-8 (tpb) $18.00

What Little Girls Are Made Of

by Carol Harris

The stone floor was too cold for sitting. Down the passageway, one smoky faggot burned low in its sconce. Next to it, an ancient oak door was set into a deep recess in the wall. In the other direction, the stone hallway disappeared into blackness.

Gelsemina crouched in the deep shadow of one of the many niches along the wall. Her legs were tired and she got to her feet again. From where she stood, she could just see the door. She had been there a long time. Waiting. She had defied all the rules of the house and had followed the lady of this land, the queen, down into the lower levels of the castle, the unused reaches. The queen had gone through that door.

There would be hell to pay when Gelsemina got back to her duties, but for now, she was more interested in that door. She had been in the castle five years, left on the doorstep with a tag on her shirt — *Take care of this poor orphan.* She wasn't an orphan, of course. This was just her father's way of getting his money's worth for taxes paid. She must have been about nine or ten at the time and had started eating everything she could get her hands on. Half the servants in the castle were donated orphans, and the household was used to dealing with them. But the butler and the housekeeper had never known quite what to do with Gelsemina. "Too nosy for her own good!"

She had been put to the kitchen and she had been put to the hall, but as soon as she had mastered her work, she would disappear. Usually they found her tucked away somewhere with a 'borrowed' book. (She came from a family of readers; her mother's pa had been a clerk and had taught them all to read.) It was Gelsemina's opinion that to be beaten and locked in a closet was less boring than shelling peas or washing floors.

When the housekeeper realized that Gelsemina was actually reading the books, she put her in the schoolroom. Gelsemina became assistant to the governess, and on the whole this worked better than any of the previous assignments.

The governess needed help for she was something of a ninny. In her charge were all the little princesses in the land, as well as the younger princelings and dukelings.

"How did the queen have so many children?" asked Gelsemina. "She looks too slim and smooth to have disgorged so many!"

"Hush, hush. My goodness, don't talk of it — as far as I know she has never borne any children of her own. These are all her stepchildren," whispered the governess.

This made a difference, of course. One had to feel some sympathy for the plight of these noisy, smelly, spoiled children. Into their days, Gelsemina brought some order.

Into the schoolroom came the queen every morning, to take a quick look at the princesses, and then she was gone to her queenly pleasures and to receiving gifts. It was common knowledge that no girl stayed past the age of eleven. After that age, the only ones ever seen again were those with perhaps a harelip, a serious squint, or a hairline just above eyebrows that joined in the middle. The others were married away to strangers in far-off lands or they simply dropped from sight.

During her days in the back kitchen, Gelsemina had heard from an old grandmother a secret story of how this queen had once been an orphan herself — not in this castle, but in another much like it. From the way everyone but the king went down on his knees when the queen was around, from the way they broke into a sickly sweat, from the way the governess nearly fainted when the queen came to the schoolroom, Gelsemina deduced that this queen had some fearful magic at her disposal. *How else does an orphan become a queen?*

Gelsemina began to watch her.

But soft! The door, the heavy door in the stone wall, was opening. Gelsemina held her breath. What would come out? A fairie? A witch? A bear? A monster?

It was the queen who stepped forth into the gloomy hallway, the queen looking even more beautiful and younger than ever. A golden glow seemed to permeate the air around her, so that her purple cloak, spangled with little stars, radiated a ghostly light. She raised her arms and in a terrible voice she called out, "Come here — you sneak-thief who follows me! I know you are here. Come to me!"

"Oh, ye gods and goddesses," mumbled Gelsemina, "what shall I do?" Quickly she mussed her hair, and squinting with all her might, she began to limp down the hall toward the queen.

"What? What is this?" jeered the queen in her terrible voice, "a little shred of garbage from the midden follows me?" She put back her head and the sound of her laughter rolled from one end to the other of the dark hallway, echoing back on itself.

She's mad, thought Gelsemina, renewing her squint.

"So, you want to partake of the queen's privilege, little cabbage leaf?"

"No, no, ma'am, not at all. I ..."

"Of course you do," said the queen, and with a sweeping gesture she raised an arm toward the open door into the wall. "Get in there, you lemon rind."

Gelsemina thought of pelting off down the dark hallway, but her curiosity was so enormous that she could not stop herself from going into that room. Once inside she took a quick look around, expecting to see shelves and tables loaded with magic potions, books, amulets. The room was entirely bare, except for a tall, standing mirror in a frame, and a crumpled velvet cloth on the floor in a heap to one side.

"So, the onion skin is disappointed," laughed the queen. She paced about the empty stone room; her heavy robe swished and whirled. "Soon you will have all you can possibly imagine to fulfill your expectations. Stand before the mirror," she purred. "See! As I said, you are nothing. Nothing!"

Indeed, there was no reflection to be seen.

"Let me out of here," cried Gelsemina, but the woman took hold of her and held her before the great mirror.

"I've brought you something, my friend," said the queen, "a little tidbit." She seemed to be talking to the mirror.

The queen, standing behind the girl, flung her arms wide.

I wish she'd quit that, thought Gelsemina.

Then the queen began to chant:

Magic mirror in magic frame
Only one who knows my name
Gut this little rabbitkin
Show her all that lies within.

Then she stepped back, and with a flash of her glowing robe, the queen was gone. Gelsemina wanted to go too, but she was caught. She saw her reflection wavering in the greenish light as the mirror began to shimmer and an acrid smell pervaded the room. There was a flickering; roiling clouds seethed across the glassy surface and the air crackled. The girl stood transfixed, mouth ajar, watching the strange play of the magic mirror. With a violent force, her own reflection was sucked into the maelstrom that convulsed the surface of the glass. Faint tracings of other images began to form in the chaos.

Chills ran across Gelsemina's shoulders as she perceived, in the lower right-hand corner of the mirror, a face with a bulbous nose and tiny eyes, its huge mouth gaping wide and screaming in rage. Across the upper right, an aged crone appeared, her narrowed eyes folded into the wrinkles of her face. The crone was laughing, and a bony finger emerged, waggling, attached to a bony hand. Other faces encircled the crone, some laughing, some crying, some tearing at their hair. Then more figures began to break through the turmoil, a running woman carrying a bag of stolen goods, a child with jam on her face, a man with a stick, a woman whose belly swelled with child. Floating in the middle was a face with a cold, cruel expression, only blackness behind its empty eyes, a mask. Then, in the upper right-hand corner, a radiant face turned upwards, luminous rays shooting from its eyes into the sky. Entwined among them all, long and sinuous, was a dragon, tail lashing, eyes glowing, fire

Artwork by Alan Giana

roaring from its mouth churning up clouds of black and red. Human limbs stretched through the smoke, a long, shapely leg made its appearance, two arms extended themselves. A hand like a claw reached out toward the smiling child.

Gelsemina was frozen before this nightmare. She was trying desperately to call out, to move, but the mirror had her prisoner. Her eyes were fixed on the clawed hand and she knew that she was that child in danger. She began to feel as though she herself flickered back and forth from the spot where she stood rooted to a place inside the mirror. The claw loomed huge above her. She couldn't make her arms move or her legs run. At the sight of that claw nearly on top of her, Gelsemina gathered all her force into one ball in the middle of her chest and then with all her might thrust it out as hard as she could. The tiny thread of a scream that came out was enough to allow her to fall to one side onto the floor.

The strange smells and sounds that had filled the room were gone instantly. She scrambled across the floor to the wall. Her breath came in gulps. Her face was beaded with sweat and her hair was damp with the effort. Moving carefully, Gelsemina seized from the floor the velvet cloth, flinging it over the mirror. The room fell black as pitch, and the girl thought she heard a low chuckling sound.

This sent Gelsemina flailing through the dark until she found the door. In the hall, there was no relief. "Blasted torch must have guttered," she panted. "I've got to get out of here somehow."

As she felt her way down countless, black walls, she was pursued by screaming, writhing figures, by a face with a bulbous nose and tiny eyes. "Oh, no. The creatures from the mirror are chasing me. I don't stand a chance."

When at last Gelsemina emerged from the lower reaches of the castle into the great hall, it was the middle of the night. She headed for the girls' dormitory, but before she could reach it, the housekeeper found her.

"There you are. We thought you had run off," said the housekeeper.

"No, ma'am. I ... I got lost."

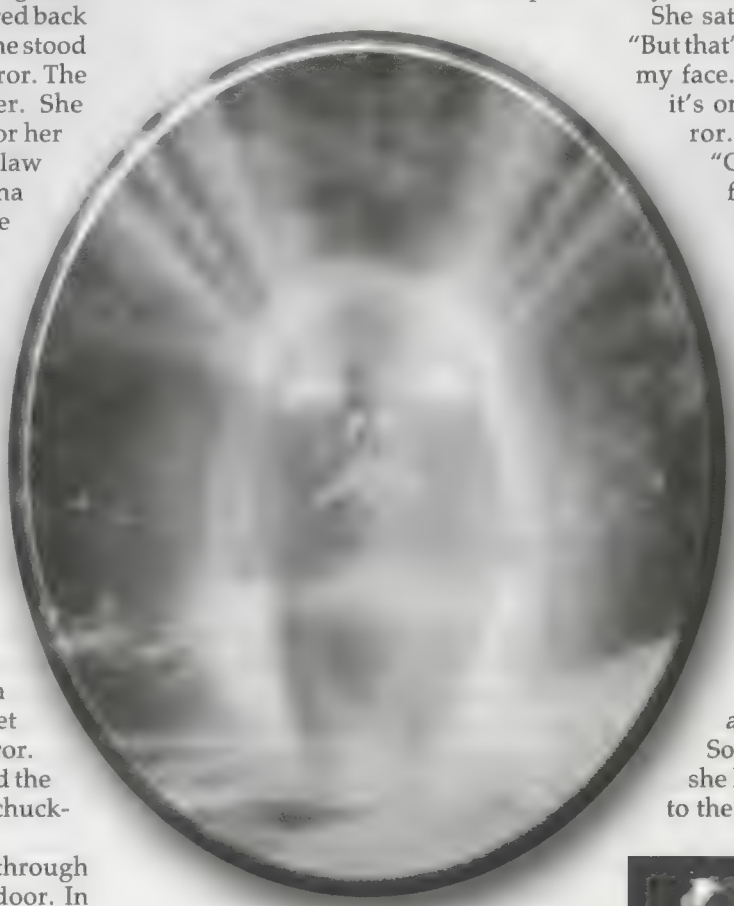
"Well, it makes no nevermind. You're out, my girl. Word came down last night, from the queen herself — you're no orphan. You're here under false colors."

"What? What difference does it make?"

"You've got to go!"

"All right. I'll go first thing in the morning."

"You'll go now, this minute! Them's the queen's own orders for if you ever turned up here again." With that, the housekeeper turned Gelsemina out of doors with only the clothes she stood up in. "And don't come back!" The castle door slammed behind her and the night watchman chivvied her out of the town.

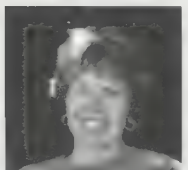


Outside the town wall, the air around her seemed alive with fearful figures. Cold, hungry, and shaken, the girl found her way off the road and into a sheltered place amongst bushes and trees. There she folded her arms around her chest and curled up to an anxious sleep.

Waking in the chilly dawn, Gelsemina found that she was on the edge of a small meadow, scented with the freshness of morning dew. In the light mist, two early morning rabbits sampled the skunk cabbage. The spring grasses became bright green as the golden fingers of the sun reached them through the branches of the trees. Little flowers, scattered in the grass, began to open. The trees stretched toward the sky and Gelsemina gave herself up to the sweetness of it. Entwined in the beauty of the meadow, she was surprised to see, shimmering before her, a face, its eyes luminous with golden rays shooting into the blue sky.

She sat back against the tree trunk. "But that's just how I was feeling. That's my face. That face is part of me, and it's one of the faces from the mirror." She frowned into space. "Could it be then that all those faces are mine, or could be mine? Oh, surely not. But, yes, it has to be."

She sat marveling at this until the meadow was flooded with sunlight. Then, Gelsemina got up and found her way back to the road. She strode along the highway, headed for home. Her father was certainly going to be angry, but Gelsemina knew that she had a dragon in her, and a good many other things as well. She could handle her father. *I'm not going to be cowed again, at least not too much.* Something in her knew that what she had seen would take her back to the castle one day. But, for now, she did not look back. ❄



For many years, **Carol Harris** worked in publishing, in-house and freelance, as an editor and as a book and cover designer, but this is her first published work as a writer. She lives in Northern California, secreted away in deepest silicon suburbia, where she hides her true identity. Friends and neighbors fail to suspect her mild looking computer of harboring monsters, magic, and witches. She is working on a novel and another short story, at this very minute.

Alan Giana lives in Connecticut and has done illustrations for this magazine and other sf publications. He has exhibited work at Boskone and other East Coast sf conventions.

Artwork by Alan Giana

Marion Zimmer Bradley's FANTASY Magazine
BACK ISSUE DESCRIPTIONS

SPECIAL OFFERS

___ Back issues available (#3 - 48 minus any sold-out issues), $90.00 postpaid.

FEATURED AUTHOR SETS

___ **Jo Clayton Special:** Issues 26, 29, 32
(Three "Arakney" stories.)
$12.00 postpaid.

___ **Dorothy Heydt Special**: Issues 21, 27, 32, 36, 40
If you can find a copy of #12, see also "Back to Basics".
$15.00 postpaid.

___ **Tanya Huff Special**: Issues 21, 28, 29
(One cover story and an interview. See also "Be It Ever So Humble" in *The Best of MZBFM #1.*)
$9.00 postpaid.

___ **Phyllis Ann Karr Special**: Issues 3, 22
(Two cover stories. See also "The Truth About the Lady of the Lake" in *The Best of MZBFM #1* and "The Robber Girl, the Sea Witch, and the Little Mermaid's Voice" in *The Best of MZBFM #2.*)
$6.00 postpaid.

___ **Cynthia McQuillin Special**: Issues 21, 26, 29, 37, 38
(Mages and Gryphons and Dragons!)
$15.00 postpaid.

___ **eluki bes shahar Special**: Issues 28, 31, 42
(Two stories, one interview)
$9.00 postpaid.

___ **Mercedes Lackey Special:** Issues 23, 37
("Killer Byte", a Diana Tregarde story; and "Grey". She was also featured in issues 9, 10, 12, and 13 — now out of print.)
$6.00 postpaid

Name: _____

Address: _____

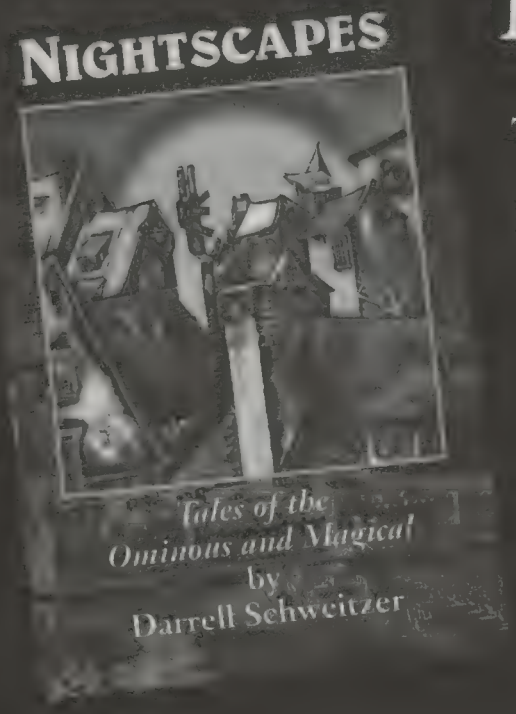
City, State: _____ Zip +4: __ __ __ __ __ — __ __ __ __

Please enclose check or money order in U.S. currency and make payable to **Marion Zimmer Bradley.**

Or: MC/Visa No. __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __ Exp. ____ / ____

Signature: _____

Send to:
P.O. Box 249
Berkeley, CA 94701



NIGHTSCAPES

The New Collection by Darrell Schweitzer

This story-collection again demonstrates the great range of the author's imagination. Ranging from Gothic tales to stories of madness, unreality, and horror, Nightscapes will transport and enchant you! Dedicated to the memory of Marion Zimmer Bradley.

"Darrell Schweitzer's fiction shocks, surprises, and delights the reader. He is a talent to reckon with in the genre of Dark Fantasy." —William F. Nolan

Available from Wildside Press, 522 Park Ave., Berkeley Heights, NJ

Such a Pretty Face

A new anthology of size-positive stories edited by Lee Martindale

This first-of-its-kind collection features tales of power and abundance by Gene Wolfe, Elizabeth Anne Scarborough, Jane Yolen, Jody Lynn Nye, and many others. Published by Meisha Merlin Publishing, Inc. Available at their website, www.meishamerlin.com and in bookstores everywhere.

Announcing the newest release from Flowinglass Music ...

Broceliande

the debut album by Celtic, Medieval, and Renaissance music quartet Broceliande. Original & trad arrangements ranging from driving, danceable beats and haunting ballads to intricate 4-part *a capella* madrigals.

Now available on CD!

Broceliande is:

Margaret Davis – vocals, Celtic harp, flute, recorders
Kristoph Klover – vocals, 12- and 6-string guitar, octave mandolin
Kris Penney – cello, vocals, viola da gamba, string bass, percussion
Karl Franzen – guitar, octave mandolin, vocals, whistle, melodian, harmonica

$17.50 postpaid from Flowinglass Music:
http://www.flowinglass.com or 2821 Truman Ave., Oakland, CA 94605.
Please make checks out to Flowinglass Music; credit card orders can be accepted at www.flowinglass.com.

Also from Flowinglass Music ...

Princess of Flowers

the Quintessence of Medieval Romance

Hauntingly beautiful Medieval, Renaissance and Celtic music performed by Margaret Davis on Celtic harp, recorders, and vocals, with other acoustic instruments. $17.50 postpaid

Avalon Rising

Shimmeringly original Celtic Rock

"Wets the mind like Irish mist ... the musical teamwork is superb." —*HarpBeat* Richly textured fusion of ancient Celtic music and contemporary elements, ranging in feel from driving Celtic beats to ethereal, harp-based ballads. $17.50 postpaid

UPCOMING IN DECEMBER 2000

The Starlit Jewel

Songs from Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS, music by Marion Zimmer Bradley et. al. Lovely Celtic and Medieval-flavored acoustic arrangements of Tolkien songs with voices, Celtic harp, recorders, cello, and other instruments. $19.50 postpaid

UPCOMING IN 2001
"Music from the Mists of Avalon"

A CD of music inspired by THE MISTS OF AVALON - authorized by Marion Zimmer Bradley before her passing. Performed by Broceliande. E-mail us to be informed of its release.

All titles available at our website, http:/www.flowinglass.com, or from 2821 Truman Ave., Oakland, CA 94605

E-mail margaret@flowinglass.com for more information or to sign our mailing list!

THE LAST WORD

First, pet news. Sisters India and Rosemary Edghill have a new puppy, Harry; his half-brother Bandit will join them soon. They are Cavalier King Charles spaniels, with "Blenheim" coloring: chestnut and white. "We fell in love with them, " Rosemary said, after doing some research into the temperaments of various breeds and then visiting a dog show. The dogs are famous for their ability to jump almost vertically — "No place in the house will be safe from them." (I think we'd better not let Harry and Bandit meet Simon, the Labrador recently acquired by Rob Alexander and Susan Stejskal. It sounds like real mayhem would be the result, especially if the spaniels teach Simon how to jump onto kitchen counters! On the other hand, the notion of a Lab curled sweetly on the fifth shelf of a bookcase, taking a nap, is rather charming.)

Second, travel news. I attended WorldCon recently, and while the artists were not happy, most attendees seemed to have a good time. It was a bit surprising to discover that the lights would be on during the Chesley nominee slide show, and that the ceremony was held in what was basically a widened hallway when there was dignified auditorium space available elsewhere. There were other logistical difficulties as well; suffice it to say, the Philadelphia WorldCon art show people took lots of notes and that art show should run much more smoothly. This may all sound like fannish whining, but many artists depend on their WorldCon income to help their finances — if only to cover the cost, which can easily be $1,000, of attending the con itself. This year's con probably didn't do much for the average artist's bottom line.

On a personal note, what pleased my heart immensely was the number of people who made a point of saying to me how sorry they are that MZBFM is closing down with issue 50, and the way many people made offers of help if a way can be found to continue the magazine, or if I want to be involved in some new fantasy publication. Artists, writers, readers, booksellers, and editors all offered their support and assistance. One publisher even said they would provide some seed money, though we both know that the amount named won't even cover the rights costs (buying the stories and artwork) for a single issue; still, it's a very handsome offer. Warren Lapine and I had a long talk (he's the man who saved *Weird Tales* from oblivion, and recently bought *Science Fiction Chronicle*). I was extremely touched by everyone's concern and generosity.

Third, new zines. There were actually a number of new ventures announced at WorldCon: Eileen Gunn is working on a science fiction e-zine called *The Infinite Matrix*, Mary Ann Mohanraj held a tea to launch *Strange Horizons* (www.strangehorizons.com), and Randy Dannenfelser handed me the first issue to appear in a year of *Adventures of Sword and Sorcery*.

Fourth, future travel. My brother has recently moved to the Northwest, so what better than to combine a visit to his new home with a trip to OryCon? I have not attended this small con in years, but I keep hearing it's a lot of fun, and it is held in Portland, one of my favorite cities (I lived there for five years, acquired my first floor loom there, grew amazingly tasty strawberries).

Fifth, issue 50. Issue 50 is shaping up nicely. The art gallery in particular will be stunning, and Vincent Di Fate has provided our final cover — the dragon he has long wanted to create for us.

Speaking of dragons, I received a lovely calendar of dragon art by artist Rob Brown, published by BrownTrout Press. I know this calendar's going to be fun to look at all year. (BrownTrout, P.O. Box 280070, San Francisco, California 94128; www.browntrout.com.)

Other books across my desk recently included the newest Kate Elliott "Crown of Stars" book from DAW, continuing the adventures of Sanglant and Liath; and **CONQUEROR'S CHILD** by Suzy McKee Charnas (and I hear Charnas has signed with Mike Ward's Hidden Knowledge press to issue an electronic version of what sounds like a *very* interesting nonfiction title, **STRANGE SEAS**).

—Rachel E. Holmen

Don't forget to vote for your favorite authors & artists —

use the Cauldron ballot on page 64

POTLATCH 10

February 23 ~ 25, 2001

Ramada Plaza Hotel International, San Francisco, CA

Book of Honor:

THUNDER AND ROSES by Theodore Sturgeon

Memberships:
$30 until Sept. 30, 2000
$35 until Jan. 31, 2001
$40 at the door

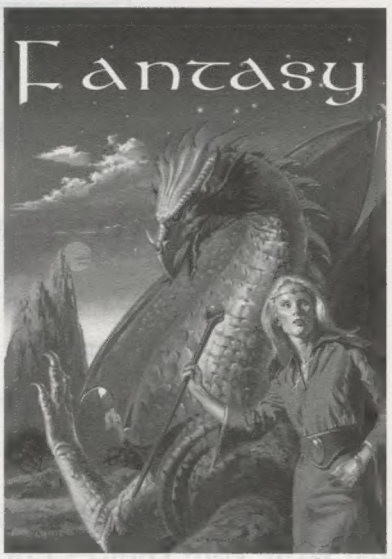
Hotel rooms:
single/double $105

Info: Potlatch 10, c/o Mary Kay Kare, PO Box 3042, San Ramon, CA 94583
Website: www.fanac.com/potlatch E-mail: potlatch10@yahoo.com

Don't Miss the Last Issue!

MZBFM Issue 50 contains the very last magazine stories handpicked by Marion Zimmer Bradley herself. The issue also features a fabulous art gallery from the many artists who have contributed to our pages over the years.

American price is $4, Canadian $4, other foreign $11. All orders, including Canadian, are payable only in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Please make checks payable to Marion Zimmer Bradley Trust.



❑ Yes, send me issue 50.

❑ I don't want to miss any back issues, so here's my order for them as well. Please send me issues:

❑ 14	❑ 16	❑ 21	❑ 23	❑ 24	❑ 25	❑ 26	❑ 27	❑ 28	❑ 29
❑ 30	❑ 31	❑ 32	❑ 33	❑ 34	❑ 35	❑ 36	❑ 37	❑ 38	❑ 39
❑ 40	❑ 41	❑ 42	❑ 43	❑ 44	❑ 45	❑ 46	❑ 47	❑ 48	❑ 49

Back issues are $4.00 each plus $1.65 per issue (first class) or $2.50 per order (book rate) for postage. (See p. 42 for descriptions of back issues.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

☐ Check enclosed ☐ Visa/MC information below

#_____exp.____/____

signature:_____

Marion Zimmer Bradley's *FANTASY* Magazine, Box 249, Berkeley CA 94701

THE CAULDRON — ISSUE #49

STORY	ARTIST
❑ **Rowan, Oak, and Iron** by Susan Dexter	❑ Mark Ferrari
❑ **Shadow Plays** by Wil Radcliffe	❑ Nick Jainschigg
❑ **The Ondine** by Roxanna Matthews	❑ Margaret Organ-Kean
❑ **The Piper at the Gate** by Rosemary Edghill	❑ Hannah M. G. Shapero
❑ **A Cobbler's Love Story** by Jeffrey Bouthiette	❑ Katy Winters
❑ **A Dragon in the Industry**, Caitlin Moriarity	❑ Norman Felchle
❑ **Hardcastle's Dragon** by Martin Owton	❑ Barb Armata
❑ **Conqueror** by Jon Hansen	❑ Margaret Davis
❑ **Spell Check** by Sean Eric Fagan	❑ Shirley Jowise
❑ **What Little Girls are Made Of**, Carol Harris	❑ Alan Giana

Only one ballot per reader, please!!!

Vote for your favorite stories and artists, then send the ballot to:

Marion Zimmer Bradley's *FANTASY Magazine*
P.O. Box 249
Berkeley, CA 94701

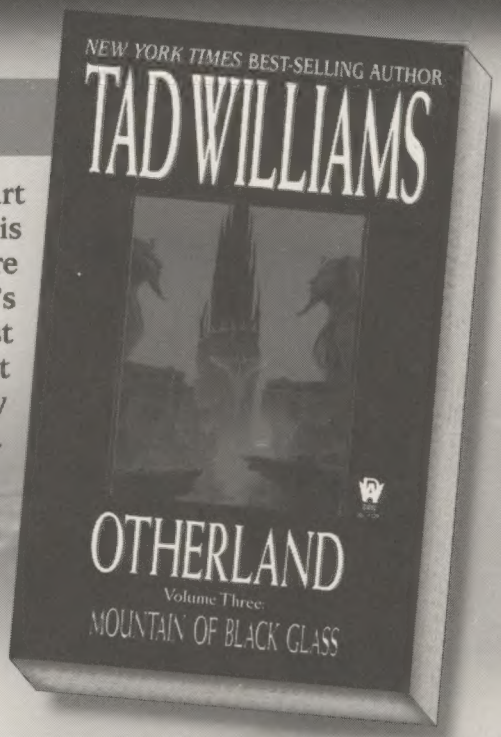
If you'd rather not tear out this page, a photocopy is fine,
or just write your choices LEGIBLY and send us a letter. Mark 1 for first, 2 for second, etc.

FROM *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR TAD WILLIAMS

Now in Paperback!

As our small band of heroes gathers in the heart of Homer's Troy, they know that their quest is running perilously short of time. And before they can hope to stop the Brotherhood's ruthless bid for immortality, they must first confront Otherland's darkest secret—an entity known only as the Other....

0-88677-906-5/$7.99

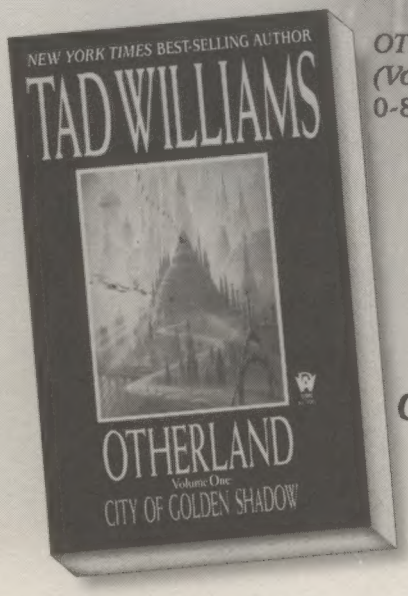


Praise for *OTHERLAND*:

"On an epic scale and most impressive of all is *OTHERLAND*, a big colorful novel full of real-world conspiracy and virtual reality wonders, with characters worth caring about."
—*Locus*

"This is the best thing Williams has ever done, and it deserves attention, time, praise. More, it deserves to be read." —*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*

Don't miss:



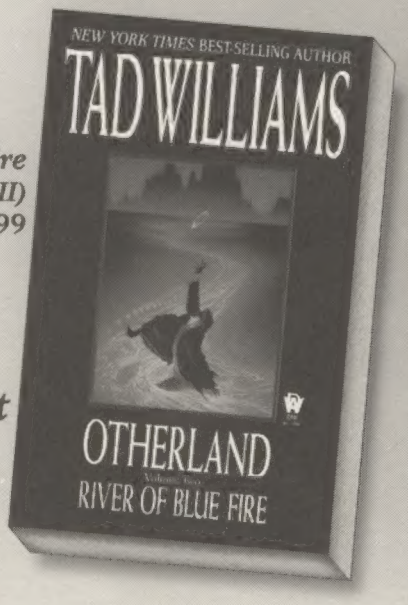
OTHERLAND: City of Golden Shadow (Volume I)
0-88677-763-1/$7.99

OTHERLAND: River of Blue Fire (Volume II)
0-88677-844-1/$7.99

Available wherever books are sold.

And coming in April 2001:

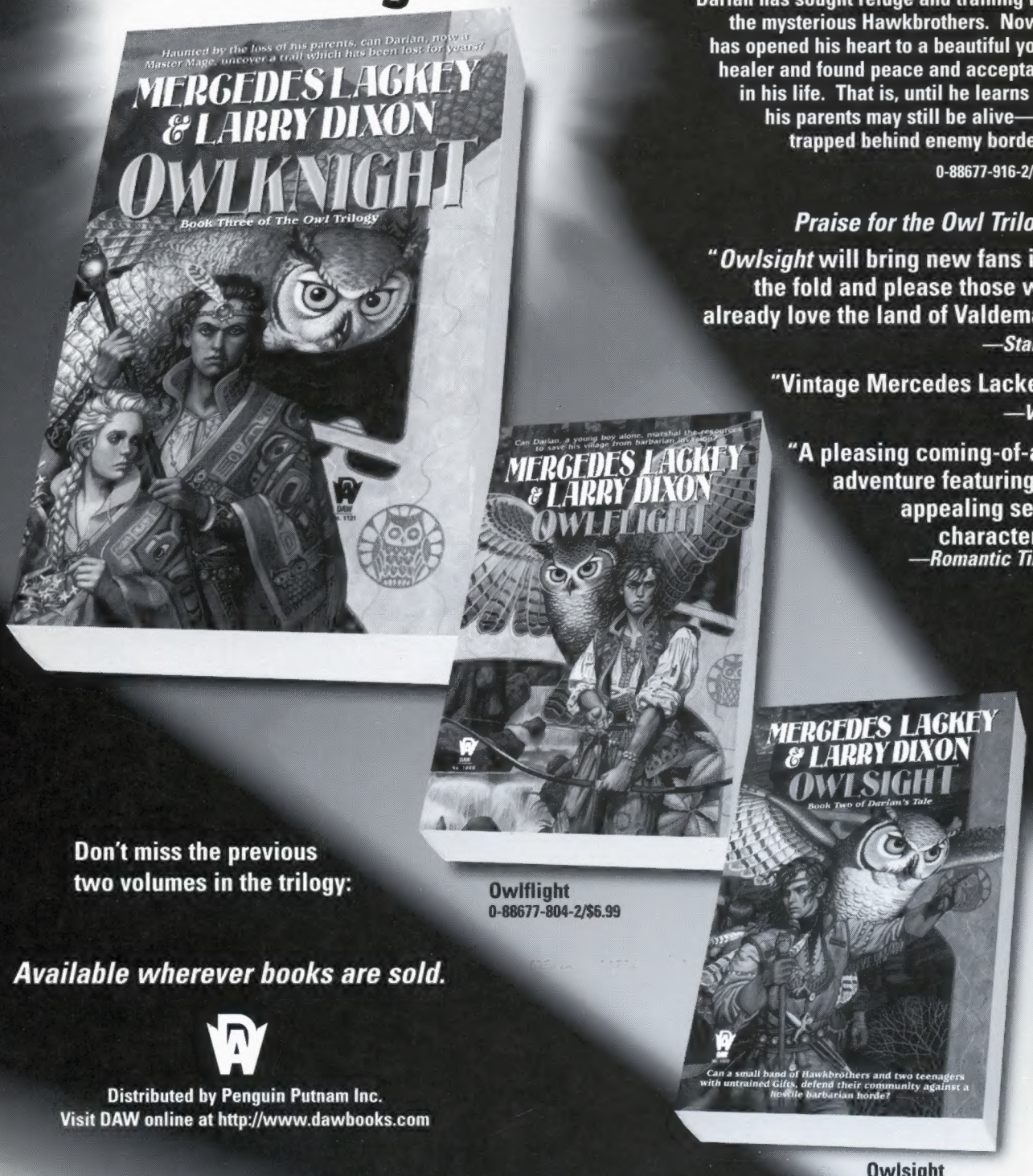
OTHERLAND: Sea of Silver Light
***OTHERLAND's* Final Volume!**



DAW

DAW Books, Inc.
Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com

The National Best-selling Series


Haunted by the loss of his parents, can Darian, now a Master Mage, uncover a trail which has been lost for years?
MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLKNIGHT
Book Three of The Owl Trilogy
Can Darian, a young boy alone, marshal the resources to save his village from barbarian invasion?
MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLFLIGHT
MERCEDES LACKEY & LARRY DIXON
OWLSIGHT
Book Two of Darian's Tale
Can a small band of Hawkbrothers and two teenagers with untrained Gifts, defend their community against a hostile barbarian horde?

Now in Paperback...

The conclusion to Lackey & Dixon's acclaimed *Owl* trilogy.

Two years after his parents disappearance, Darian has sought refuge and training from the mysterious Hawkbrothers. Now he has opened his heart to a beautiful young healer and found peace and acceptance in his life. That is, until he learns that his parents may still be alive—and trapped behind enemy borders...

0-88677-916-2/$6.99

Praise for the Owl Trilogy:

"*Owlsight* will bring new fans into the fold and please those who already love the land of Valdemar."
—Starlog

"Vintage Mercedes Lackey."
—Voya

"A pleasing coming-of-age adventure featuring an appealing set of characters."
—Romantic Times

Don't miss the previous two volumes in the trilogy:

Owlflight
0-88677-804-2/$6.99

Owlsight
0-88677-803-4/$6.99

Available wherever books are sold.

Distributed by Penguin Putnam Inc.
Visit DAW online at http://www.dawbooks.com